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FREEDOM
INSTITUTE

2020
INDONESIA
Religious Freedom
Landscape Report



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Indonesia is the most important country in the world about which most people know practically nothing."

Bernard Adenay Risakotta, Southeast Asia Specialist



"Indonesia is the most important country in the world about which most people know practically nothing," observes Southeast Asia specialist Bernard Adenay Risakotta.

Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, its third largest democracy, and the fourth most populous country on earth. It is among the most successful democracies in the Islamic world, and the only Muslim-majority country whose Christian population has significantly grown in numbers and influence since independence from colonial rule.

Unlike the Middle East, where authoritarian rulers keep religious institutions on a short leash, Indonesia's mass Islamic organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, are independent, self-organizing and free of government control. Both participated in founding the Republic of Indonesia as a multi-religious and pluralistic ("*Pancasila*") nation-state, and remain its primary defenders to this day.

With some 90 million followers, the NU is without parallel in Southeast Asia and the wider Muslim world. It has participated in every major phase of Indonesia's modern history and consistently determined outcomes, from the defeat of Dutch colonialism in the 1940s to ensuring Indonesia's successful transition to democracy in the late '90s.

Most international reports on religious freedom focus exclusively on specific instances and, sometimes, patterns of religious persecution. This *Indonesia Religious Freedom Landscape Report* brings into stark relief the shortcomings of this largely plaintive, defeatist and superficial approach. Though the report is unsparing in its analysis of Indonesia's shortcomings and of the complex array of forces that threaten its traditions of religious pluralism and tolerance, it places this analysis within a wider framework that examines

“strengths” and “opportunities” as well as “threats” and “weaknesses.”

Despite the existence of major challenges to religious freedom in Indonesia, it is nevertheless home to powerful actors that are systematically and institutionally maneuvering to strengthen the prospects for religious liberty in Indonesia, South and Southeast Asia, and the world at large. Viewed from a regional or even global perspective, Indonesia thus embodies what development scholars in the 1960s and 1970s came to describe as “positive deviance.”

Positive deviance is based on the observation that there are certain individuals and groups in every community whose uncommon behaviors and strategies enable them to solve problems more effectively than similarly situated peers. Cases of “positive deviance” offer valuable lessons that are rarely scrutinized, analyzed, or disseminated in a form that would be of practical benefit to the cause of promoting religious freedom.

With an operational base in the region and years of careful networking and engagement, the Religious Freedom Institute’s South and Southeast Asia Action Team (RFI SSEA-AT) has identified a number of promising local religious freedom actors and strategies. At the broadest level, these investigations have led SSEA-AT to conclude that Indonesia is the country in the region with the greatest “cultural and spiritual capital” conducive to religious freedom.

Though many factors are at work, one crucial reason that Indonesia is a relative bright spot within the religious freedom

landscape of South and Southeast Asia and the Muslim world is a single civil society institution: the Nahdlatul Ulama. Now the largest mass Islamic organization in the world, the NU was founded nearly a century ago, in 1926, almost simultaneously with the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1925 in Egypt. However, while the Muslim Brotherhood and its numerous ideological offspring—such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, Hamas, al-Qaeda and ISIS—have consistently pursued militant, integralist, and anti-pluralist agendas, with fateful consequences for Egypt and the world, the NU has become an increasingly robust and creative defender and advocate of a distinctively Indonesian vision of religious pluralism and tolerance.

At a time when the Islamic State group's meteoric rise was destabilizing the Middle East and monopolizing global attention, Nahdlatul Ulama spiritual leaders mobilized Indonesia's Muslim majority, including President Joko Widodo, around a contrary and radically different vision of Islam and its primary message as *rahmah* (universal love and compassion), and had a decisive impact upon the 2014 and 2019 national elections.

For example, NU leaders created the *Islam Nusantara* (“East Indies Islam”) movement to address the threat posed by Islamist extremism. In 2015, the *New York Times* described a film documenting the birth of this movement as “a relentless, religious repudiation of the Islamic State and the opening salvo in a global campaign by the world’s largest Muslim group to challenge its ideology head-on.” NU leaders popularized the term “*Islam Nusantara*” to describe the

indigenous, tolerant forms of Islam practiced by the vast majority of Indonesians and rooted in South and Southeast Asia's civilizational heritage.

Building upon the *Islam Nusantara* campaign's success, NU spiritual leaders Kyai Haji A. Mustofa Bisri and Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staquf founded *Bayt ar-Rahmah li ad-Da'wa al-Islamiyah Rahmatan li al-'Alamin* (Home of Divine Grace for Revealing and Nurturing Islam as a Blessing for All Creation) with LibForAll co-founder C. Holland Taylor. Bayt ar-Rahmah serves as a hub for the worldwide expansion of NU operations and leads the Humanitarian Islam movement, which seeks to foster the emergence of a global civilization founded upon respect for the equal rights and dignity of every human being.

In a major break with Islamic conservatism, in 2019 Nahdlatul Ulama abolished the *fiqh* (Islamic legal) category of "infidels," those who do not adhere to Islam, which has long cast a shadow over the faith's relationship with other religions. The Central Board of the Indonesian movement published documents, based on a

gathering of some 20,000 Muslim religious scholars, that endorsed the concept of a nation-state rather than caliphate and recognized all citizens irrespective of religion, ethnicity or creed as having equal rights and obligations.

The 2019 National Conference of Nahdlatul Ulama Religious Scholars decreed that the modern nation-state is theologically legitimate; that there is no legal category of infidel (*kafir*) within a modern nation-state, only "fellow citizens"; that Muslims must obey the laws of any modern nation-state in which they dwell; and that Muslims have a religious obligation to foster peace rather than wage war on behalf of their co-religionists, whenever conflict erupts between Muslim and non-Muslim populations anywhere in the world.

In a region where much wrong is being perpetrated by many governments and non-state actors, Indonesia is doing something right. Now is a good time for the rest of us to take note and learn all that we can from Indonesia's remarkable and multi-faceted example of "positive deviance."

Timothy Samuel Shah, Ph.D.
Vice-President for Strategy & International Research
Director, South & Southeast Asia Action Team
Religious Freedom Institute

INTRODUCTION

Religion has been integral to the spirit and culture of humanity for millennia.¹ The cradle of multiple ancient religions, South and Southeast Asia remains one of the world's most religiously diverse and spiritually vibrant regions on earth. At the same time, all too many of its two and a half billion people suffer on account of their religion. The South and Southeast Asia Action Team, an arm of the Religious Freedom Institute (RFI), exists to advance religious freedom for all people throughout this vast region, especially those who are most persecuted. This landscape report on Indonesia—the world's largest Muslim country and the second most populous country in South and Southeast Asia—constitutes an important step towards achieving that goal and represents the combined expertise of numerous scholars and analysts.

The purpose of this report on Indonesia's religious freedom landscape is to determine where and in what ways this fundamental human right is being preserved and promoted, where it is being violated, and what governments, civil society organizations, and communities can do to strengthen this foundational freedom for the future well-being of Indonesia as well as South and Southeast Asia as a whole. RFI aims to assess where the terrain is rough and treacherous, as well as where it is smooth and pleasant. Only once you know the landscape and identify

a favorable route, any experienced traveler knows, can the journey begin.

The RFI's South and Southeast Asia Action Team focuses on eight of the most populous and strategically significant countries in South and Southeast Asia: Bangladesh, Burma (Myanmar), India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Indonesia and India in particular are the two most populous, economically robust, and strategically significant countries in the region. Together these eight countries have a population of about 2.2 billion people, comprising 86 percent of the regional population (about 2.5 billion) and 28 percent of the total world population (about 7.8 billion).² The whole regional population comprises about 32 percent of the world population. South and Southeast Asia is home to the four largest Muslim populations in the world (Indonesia, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh), 99 percent of the world's Hindus, and almost all of the world's Buddhist-majority countries.³ In other words, that is more than 1.15 billion Hindus, 825 million Muslims, and over 80 million Buddhists, as well as about 72 million Christians.⁴

The region is also home to some of the most religiously restricted societies in the world, even while several of its countries maintain reasonably robust democratic institutions and dynamic civil societies.



For example, Polity IV's democracy index rates Indonesia and India as "democracies," with high levels of political competition and restraints on executive power, and Freedom House rates both countries as "partly free" electoral democracies.

About the Religious Freedom Institute

Securing religious freedom for "everyone, everywhere"—for Buddhists in Bangladesh as much as Muslims in Maryland—is the mission of the RFI. An independent, nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C., RFI is committed to achieving broad acceptance of religious liberty as a fundamental human right, a source of individual and social flourishing, the cornerstone of a successful society, and a driver of national and international security. It achieves this goal by convincing stakeholders in select regions that religious freedom can help them achieve their own goals—political, economic, strategic, and religious.

Accordingly, RFI's action teams establish a presence in strategic regions across the globe in order to build coalitions and local and regional networks to make religious freedom a greater priority—and ultimately a lived reality—for governments, civil society, religious communities, businesses, and the general public. Each of these sectors of society has a crucial stake in the future of the religious freedom landscape in their country. Drawing on the research of its associated scholars as well as the cumulative body of scholarship produced by its predecessor project, the Religious Freedom Project at Georgetown University, RFI makes an evidence-based case to these and other important sectors and stakeholders that the freedom of religious belief and practice is a principle they can and should embrace in order to benefit themselves and their societies.

Foundational to RFI's outlook is the recognition that religion is an integral feature of human nature and an irreducible component of human flourishing. Human beings, who are religious animals just as profoundly as they are political animals or conjugal animals, have always asked religious questions, and

persist in asking these questions as much as they ever have: Who am I? Where did I come from? What is the meaning and purpose of existence? What is the nature of ultimate reality? The search for the best answers to these questions, and the attempt to align one's reason, will, and whole being with ultimate or transcendent reality as best as one can discern it, is what we generally call religion. Religious freedom, then, is the most fundamental and distinctively human of all freedoms because it reflects the most basic and characteristically human of all strivings—the striving not only to know the truth, but to *place one's whole self in alignment with the whole truth about the whole of Reality*. As such, religious freedom has at least four distinct dimensions.

The first of these “religious freedoms” reflects the intellectual and spiritual dimension of religion, and requires that all people should be free to use their natural powers of discernment, reason, and intuition to seek and explore the truth about ultimate reality in all of its depths. The second of these freedoms reflects the dimension of doing or practice. It means that all people should be free to engage the truths they have learned from theoretical inquiry and act on them with authenticity and integrity. In other words, this dimension of religious freedom involves engaging one's conscience and will to align oneself as fully as one can with the truths one discovers about transcendent reality. Third, the social dimension means that all people must be free to share the truths they discover about ultimate reality with others, and to join with those of like mind and spirit to live them out. Fourth, the civil or political dimension means that all people should be free, both individually and communally, to express their religious beliefs in civil and political society, and to formulate and propose visions of the common informed by these beliefs. Included here is the right to create and operate religious institutions that reflect a religious community's foundational principles and defining mission.

From a broader perspective, the aforementioned dimensions represent aspects of what might be considered the liberty wing of religious freedom. That



is, religious freedom in full requires that people enjoy the liberty to embrace and express whatever beliefs about religion—including unorthodox beliefs or beliefs that differ from traditional religious claims—most accord with the dictates of their own conscience, without direct, coercive interference by government or non-government actors.

At the same time, religious freedom requires another wing—the wing of equality—in order to take full flight and make it possible for all individuals and societies to achieve both the basic good of religion as well as other components of human flourishing. The equality wing of religious freedom requires that people be free from arbitrary discrimination or unequal treatment because of their beliefs about religion. Violation of religious equality—as through the infliction of systematic discrimination on particular individuals or groups merely because of their religious beliefs or identities, or the creation of a climate of hatred or intolerance of certain people because of religion—is unjust and illegitimate even when it does not directly block or limit one’s free exercise of religion.

One reason is that arbitrary discrimination or unequal treatment is incompatible with the demands of human dignity, which all human beings equally share by virtue of their common humanity. As sources as diverse as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany, and the Declaration on Religious Liberty of the Roman Catholic Church recognize, human dignity is the proximate ground of religious freedom as well as all fundamental human rights, and

it is the ground, furthermore, of every person’s entitlement to equal justice.⁵ Another reason is that gross violations of religious equality are incompatible with the vision of a society animated by a dynamic pluralism in which all citizens can share their religious and moral insights with each other. Only within a framework of basic equality can people of all religious perspectives draw on their distinct convictions and unique “spiritual capital” both to contribute to the common good and to enrich the perspectives of their fellow citizens.

Religious freedom is thus a fundamental and capacious right that deserves secure protection in law and widespread respect in culture. On paper if not in practice, this idea has been widely accepted by the international community. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance (Article 18).

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status (Article 2).⁶

The mission of the Religious Freedom Institute is motivated by the conviction

that religious freedom in full—in its equality dimension and in each of its liberty dimensions—is a natural, universal, and inviolable human right that is grounded in the inherent dignity of every human being. At the same time, because religious belief and practice are such central components of human life and flourishing, religious freedom is also a powerful driver of a wide array of social goods, including democracy, civil liberty, stability, economic prosperity, equality of women, and security.

RFI activities are further premised on the reality that religious freedom tends to be strong and enduring only when it is embedded in a society's moral and religious culture as well as its legal and political structure. Religious freedom actors must pursue not only top-down institutional reform but also bottom-up persuasion, education, and mobilization. If religious freedom is promoted only by governments and is not practiced at the level of local communities, it remains an empty ideal. On paper, most of the world's national constitutions recognize religious freedom as a fundamental right in one form or another. The reality remains, however, that the vast majority of the world's population lives in countries with high or very high government or social restrictions on religion and the trendlines over the past decade appear to be worsening.⁷

Religious freedom will be a reality for “everyone, everywhere” only when it enjoys grassroots support and is articulated, practiced, and spread at the level of local and national communities and traditions. Advancing religious freedom while respecting local and national contexts entails adopting approaches to articulating and justifying religious freedom that are credible and compelling within local perspectives. In fact, RFI's South and Southeast Asia Action Team seeks to identify and cultivate seeds of religious freedom that are already present in the region's own spiritual and cultural soil. As this Indonesia landscape report underscores, the soil of South and Southeast Asia tends to be fertile and receptive insofar as all of its countries and cultures enjoy histories and traditions of vibrant religious pluralism.



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Religious Freedom Institute



As the example of Indonesia highlights, embedding religious freedom in both political structures and moral and spiritual cultures requires an approach that works across multiple sectors—religious, political, legal, cultural, and educational. It requires identifying and mobilizing networks of actors that are willing to contribute resources and effort in a coordinated fashion. Among these actors, RFI’s South and Southeast Asia Action Team strives to be a partner that joins with others on a footing of equality and mutual respect, and that works collaboratively towards the goal of religious freedom for “everyone, everywhere,” in South and Southeast Asia and beyond.

RFI's South & Southeast Asia Action Team

RFI pursues its mission and vision through teams of scholars and other experts working to advance religious freedom in a particular region or issue area. This *Indonesia Religious Freedom Landscape Report* is one of eight religious freedom landscape reports by the South and Southeast Asia Action Team (SSEA-AT) on our eight focus countries of Bangladesh, Burma (Myanmar), India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Building on the analysis in these reports, SSEA-AT is committed to advancing religious freedom across South and Southeast Asia. SSEA-AT seeks first and foremost to build mutual trust and partnerships with local religious freedom actors and entities across the region. Currently, the team has accumulated hundreds of such contacts, including over 275 individuals and more than 200 organizations. These contacts comprise an invaluable foundation and support network, which makes it possible to develop a shared assessment of the religious freedom landscape in South and Southeast Asia as well as a shared action plan that seeks to cultivate religious freedom from the ground up. RFI’s ongoing engagement efforts in the region include private meetings with religious and political leaders, activists, and other religious freedom actors and organizations; private meetings with legislators and government officials; public events and grassroots outreach; conflict resolution initiatives; policy formation and analysis; humanitarian relief and/or development services; and educational initiatives.

The purpose of the South and Southeast Asia Action Team’s country landscape reports is to survey the current state and future trajectory of religious freedom in the region. Specifically, each country landscape analysis, including the present Indonesia report:

- ◆ Assesses the religious freedom environment in terms of the favorability of political, socio-cultural, religious, economic, and historical conditions; the leading threats and obstacles to advancing religious freedom given these conditions; the major opportunities or enabling conditions for advancing religious freedom; and the positions of leading political and religious actors vis-à-vis religious freedom. Each report focuses on a given country’s religious freedom *capabilities* as well as its religious freedom *challenges*.
- ◆ Assesses the state of empirical knowledge and research on religious freedom, including any significant gaps that may exist.

- ◆ Assesses the education system with respect to religious freedom, including the extent to which religious freedom concepts are integrated into primary, secondary, and higher education curricula.
- ◆ Identifies key religious freedom actors (individuals, organizations, and initiatives) already in place, and actors that might engage in religious freedom activities if given the opportunity, resources, and rationale to do so.
- ◆ Assesses the comparative strengths and weaknesses of these actors.
- ◆ Identifies the major gaps or missing elements in their activities.
- ◆ Evaluates the status of communication in the region, including the primary communicative mechanisms by which the views of elites and public opinion are shaped and disseminated.

Based on the findings in the landscape reports, SSEA-AT has developed a Regional Action Plan that lays out a comprehensive strategy for advancing religious freedom in South and Southeast Asia, with RFI as a partner working in close and equal partnership with other actors. The Regional Action Plan includes:

- ◆ A strategic assessment of the status of religious freedom in the region, based on the findings of the landscape reports.
- ◆ A strategy to leverage political, socio-cultural, religious, economic, and historical factors that are conducive to the promotion of religious freedom throughout SSEA.
- ◆ A strategy to operationalize networks of existing religious freedom actors.
- ◆ A strategy to overcome or neutralize obstacles to the advancement of religious freedom.
- ◆ A strategy to identify and encourage new actors, including religious and political leaders, to advance religious freedom.
- ◆ A strategy to expand the quality and scope of freedoms enjoyed by inhabitants of various countries throughout the region.
- ◆ Recommendations on how funders can most strategically invest to advance religious freedom in the region.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Please note that all of the South and Southeast Asia Action Team's religious freedom landscape reports have been made possible by the generous funding of Templeton Religion Trust. In the drafting and framing of this report, we also gratefully acknowledge the generous financial support of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom through its Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy. Any errors of fact or interpretation are, however, the sole responsibility of the report's primary authors. The landscape reports are the result of the collective effort of the entire SSEA Action Team, which is comprised of the following:

- ◆ **Director:** Timothy Shah
- ◆ **Associate Director:** Rebecca Samuel Shah
- ◆ **Project Managers:** Liris Thomas and Ana Spevak
- ◆ **RFI Associated Scholars:** Tehmina Arora, Chad Bauman, Robert Hefner, Farahnaz Ispahani, Paul Marshall, Daniel Philpott, Yamini Ravindran, Benedict Rogers, Nilay Saiya, and Eugene Yapp
- ◆ **Research Assistants:** Luke Adams, Michael Gioia, and Matt Mills
- ◆ **Research Interns:** Sachal Jacob and Sarah Thomas

Though they are not responsible for the ultimate form or content of the reports, outside researchers who contributed invaluable and extensively to the reports include Dicky Sofjan (Indonesia and Malaysia); Josiah Ponnudurai (Malaysia and Indonesia); Luke Wagner (Nepal); and Sara Singha (Pakistan). In addition, Michael Gioia worked indispensably—and indefatigably—to edit, re-write, format, and incorporate extensive feedback into all the reports over several intense weeks in the summer of 2019.

We particularly want to acknowledge the contribution of **Thomas Dinham**, special advisor to Gerakan Pemuda Ansor, Nahdlatul Ulama's 5-million member young adults movement. Drawing on his wealth of knowledge of religion and politics in contemporary Indonesia, Mr. Dinham greatly enriched and expanded the report's analysis, particularly with respect to the range and contributions of pro-Pancasila organizations.

We also acknowledge the meticulous and diligent editorial work by RFI's communications team. Communications director Nathan Berkeley and communications manager Cecilia Leatherman edited, revised, and refined the country landscape reports in various versions and iterations over the last 12-18 months.

Finally, the editors of the report want to single out Matt Mills, a rising junior at Baylor University, for special gratitude. Matt served as our primary research assistant on all the landscape reports in the final six months of their drafting, redrafting, and publication. He did far more than an ordinary research assistant, contributing immeasurably to the conceptualization and drafting of the landscape report introduction as well as to the careful proofreading and formatting of the entire manuscript. His work was consistently meticulous and his demeanor unfailingly cheerful. The document could not have assumed the form that it did, when it did, without Matt's superb efforts.



OVERVIEW:

CONTEXT, CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Indonesia's ancient and enduring traditions of religious pluralism and tolerance find modern expression in *Pancasila*—the five-part foundational philosophy of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI)—which roots an inclusive, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic nationalism within a profound and spiritually grounded respect for religious and cultural diversity.⁸ The deep sources of this worldview may be found within the millennia-old civilizational heritage of the Indosphere, a vast geographic and cultural zone stretching from Pakistan to Indonesia, which was formatively and permanently shaped by the great spiritual traditions—particularly Hinduism and Buddhism—that originated in the Indian subcontinent. Indeed, the acclaimed motto of NKRI, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (“Oneness Amid

Diversity”) comes from an ancient Javanese *kakawin* (book of poetry) that promotes mutual understanding and tolerance between Buddhists and Hindu followers of Shiva.⁹

Uniquely among Muslim-majority societies within the Indosphere, a majority of Indonesian Muslims continue to cherish their pre-Islamic heritage as a foundational and intrinsic part of their cultural identity, giving rise to an indigenous and pluralist expression of Islam popularly known as “*Islam Nusantara*” (the Islam of the Malay Archipelago). A distinguishing feature of *Islam Nusantara* is its tendency to prioritize religion's spiritual essence over its purely formal and dogmatic elements, which “readily lend themselves to weaponization and, in the wrong hands, foster conflict rather than

social unity.”¹⁰ *Islam Nusantara* remains a vibrant, powerful, and politically decisive force within Indonesia, and especially on the heavily populated island of Java—which constitutes the geographic, political and economic center of the country, and the heartland of the largest Islamic mass movement on earth, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU).

With over 90 million followers, NU is a living embodiment of the traditions of *Islam Nusantara* and has, since the founding of NKRI, served as a bulwark against persistent and at times violent efforts by Islamists to overturn *Pancasila* and subvert Indonesia’s religiously plural and inclusive constitution (UUD–45). This role has increased in importance since NU Chairman Abdurrahman Wahid became Indonesia’s first reform-era president and oversaw the nation’s successful transformation into the world’s largest Muslim-majority democracy. As a natural consequence of this transition to democracy, Islamist groups opposed to *Pancasila* pluralism—which were subject to political repression during the Soekarno and Suharto eras—have acquired significant freedom to maneuver both socially and politically. In contemporary Indonesia, the unresolved conflict between classical Islamic law and the modern nation state—which dates back to the 1945 constitution—has given rise to intense competition for power among a wide range of competing forces within society at large, including diverse political, military and business elites.¹¹

Modern, democratic Indonesia thus finds itself embroiled in a fierce “culture war” between long-cherished, pluralistic and tolerant forms of Islam practiced by the vast majority of Indonesians and

rooted in the civilizational heritage of the Indosphere, on the one hand, and a radical, anti-*Pancasila* movement grounded in widely accepted tenets of Islamic orthodoxy¹² that lend themselves to political weaponization and violence, on the other.¹³ Specific examples of such tenets—identified by Nahdlatul Ulama spiritual leaders—include the Islamic legal category of “infidel” (*kafir*) and a *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudential) requirement that Muslims strive to establish a caliphate.¹⁴ These “obsolete and problematic tenets within Islamic orthodoxy”¹⁵ induce *jihadis* and other Muslim extremists to reject the modern nation-state and buttress their claim that laws derived from modern, democratic political processes lack theological and political legitimacy.¹⁶ As Muslim intellectual and *New York Times* columnist Mustafa Akyol has observed, “Mainstream authorities in many Muslim-majority countries still uphold a pre-modern worldview and jurisprudence whose conflict with modern values is impossible to hide. It just doesn’t look convincing to say, ‘Islam is a religion of peace,’ while adding, ‘but we kill anyone who apostatizes from it.’”¹⁷

These problematic tenets—contained within the classical corpus of Islamic thought and jurisprudence—are also routinely weaponized by Islamists and unscrupulous opportunists, including certain (but by no means all) political, military, and business elites, as a potent means of mobilizing believers in support of disparate personal, economic, and political agendas. A recent example of this phenomenon was the highly coordinated and well-financed campaign to politically destroy the Christian governor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahajjah Purnama, which will be

discussed later in this report. Although grassroots Islamic organizations such as NU and the *Muhammadiyah* continue to provide Indonesia's pluralist and democratic political order with powerful theological and social authority, they do so in the face of anti-pluralist forces that have "rebounded" in post-Suharto Indonesia to exercise influence at multiple levels of society and politics.

Often at the behest of these anti-pluralist forces, a number of federal, state, and local statutes and regulations are interpreted and applied in ways that impinge on religious freedom. The Blasphemy Law No.1/PNPS/1965 and the Regulation on Houses of Worship allow local governments and vigilante groups to harass religious minorities (most notably Christians as well as the Ahmadiyya and sometimes Shia Muslim groups). Furthermore, the decrees against Ahmadiyya, Shia, and *Gerakan Fajar Nusantara (Gafatar)* highlight that problems still exist for religious and spiritual groups that are not officially recognized by the government.¹⁸ The very existence of officially sanctioned *agama* (religions) runs the risk of undermining the rights of non-sanctioned groups, including agnostics, atheists, and some indigenous faiths.

In some regions of Indonesia, inconsistent enforcement of the rule of law has allowed local governments, district heads, and mayors to restrict the religious freedom of minority communities in spite of court orders and the respective community's close relationship with authorities. For example, the Ahmadiyya community continues to be persecuted in several regions despite their having good

relationships with the Minister of Religious Affairs and the chief of police.¹⁹

Nevertheless, one year after the 2019 presidential elections, it appears that some of the predictions as to the decline of *pro-Pancasila* forces and the growth of an anti-pluralist bloc may have been too dire. The heavily-Javanese NU—in association with an alliance of *pro-Pancasila* Christians, Hindus, and other nationalist Muslims—proved decisive in securing the 2019 re-election of moderate Muslim President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) to a second and final term in office. In the months immediately following the Jokowi victory, many foreign analysts worried that in its aftermath Indonesia was witnessing the consolidation of a voting bloc "committed to a rigid application of political Islam in Indonesia," and promoting a religiously differentiated and Muslim-first, rather than religiously inclusive, variety of citizenship.²⁰ Analysts also worried that Jokowi's rival, former general Prabowo Subianto, might seek to delegitimize the results of the election and keep his coalition mobilized up to Indonesia's next presidential election, due in 2024.

In the days following the release of the results of the presidential elections, these worries seemed confirmed. At first the Prabowo supporters did seek to discredit the results of the national elections, citing evidence (subsequently disproved) of widespread voter fraud. There were also reports of discussions among Prabowo supporters with an eye toward devising a long-term strategy to weaken Jokowi and undermine his government. Some six months after the presidential elections, however,

Indonesians were startled to learn that President Jokowi had offered, and Prabowo Subianto accepted, the position of Minister of Defense. Although the appointment caused concern in human rights circles because of allegations of Prabowo's involvement in numerous human rights abuses, the appointment caused even greater consternation in the ranks of Jokowi's Islamist opponents. Among them Prabowo's decision was seen as a sign of his lack of interest in indefinitely mobilizing an Islamist opposition.

During this time frame, other members of the anti-Jokowi opposition also reconciled with the government or simply moderated their position. The hardline Islamist minority within the fast-disintegrating coalition remained implacably opposed to Jokowi, but failed to gain broad traction. These and other developments since the April 2019 elections should not be seen as evidence that struggles between anti- and pro-*Pancasila* forces are over. They are certain to continue. But developments suggest that the coalition that had supported Prabowo Subianto was considerably broader than the wing committed to an Islam-first political agenda closely linked to certain tenets of Islamic orthodoxy. Developments also suggest that reports of a growing, two-bloc polarization between Islamists and *Pancasila* inclusivists may have been overstated.

Alarmed by the threat that a resurgent Islamist current poses to the unity of Indonesia and its people—and to the future of humanity as a whole—the spiritual leadership of NU has launched a long-term, systematic

and institutional campaign to reform what they describe as “obsolete and problematic tenets of Islamic orthodoxy” that lend themselves to political weaponization and enjoin religious hatred, supremacy and violence.²¹ This global “Humanitarian Islam” movement grew out of the 2014 *Islam Nusantara* campaign, an initiative undertaken in conjunction with LibForAll Foundation and its International Institute of Quranic Studies (IIQS), which were co-founded by former NU Chairman and Indonesian President Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid. This campaign was wildly successful, popularizing the term “*Islam Nusantara*,” deploying it as a powerful cultural motif for re-enlivening Indonesians’ appreciation of their distinct civilizational heritage, and rallying Muslims across Indonesia’s vast archipelago against Islamism at a time when the Islamic State, or ISIS, was wreaking havoc across the Middle East.²²

Building upon the *Islam Nusantara* campaign’s success, NU spiritual leaders Kyai Haji A. Mustofa Bisri and Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staquf founded *Bayt ar-Rahmah li ad-Da’wa al-Islamiyah Rahmatan li al-‘Alamin* (Home of Divine Grace for Revealing and Nurturing Islam as a Blessing for All Creation) with LibForAll co-founder C. Holland Taylor. Bayt ar-Rahmah serves as a hub for the worldwide expansion of NU operations and leads the global Humanitarian Islam movement, which seeks to promote religious freedom by reconciling Islamic teachings with the reality of a contemporary civilization characterized by democracy and human rights.

At the February 2019 National Conference of Nahdlatul Ulama

Religious Scholars, NU General Secretary and Bayt ar-Rahmah's Director of Religious Affairs, Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staquf, secured a formal NU ruling that abolished the legal category of infidels (*kafir*) within the modern nation state, while simultaneously affirming the theological legitimacy of the nation state and of laws formulated through modern political processes. The classical *fiqh* definition and prescriptions regarding the treatment of infidels have long been weaponized to promote legal restrictions on religion as well as to incite social vigilantism and terrorism against those viewed as "non-Muslim." In addition, NU adopted a series of declarations co-authored by Mr. Staquf that form the basis for Humanitarian Islam and its wide-ranging program of theological renewal.²³ Addressing the Islamist threat to religious freedom in Indonesia, Mr. Staquf states:

There can be little doubt that the outcome of this struggle, within Indonesia, will be impacted by the forces of globalization, which bring people and ideas from the far corners of the earth into daily contact with Indonesian Muslims, for both good and ill. So long as obsolete, medieval tenets within Islamic orthodoxy remain the dominant source of religious authority throughout the Muslim world, Indonesian Islamists will continue to draw power and sustenance from developments in the world at large.²⁴

The visionary efforts of NU's spiritual leaders—who are leveraging their civilizational heritage to "recontextualize (i.e., reform) obsolete and problematic

tenets within Islamic orthodoxy"—make Bayt ar-Rahmah a powerful vehicle and ideal partner for promoting religious freedom in Indonesia and worldwide.²⁵ The integrity of these devout Muslim leaders; their honesty in acknowledging and addressing the instrumental manipulation of their own faith; their vast, 90-million strong following within Indonesia; and their extensive global network of supporters and allies render them capable of both defeating the anti-pluralist forces that threaten the gains of Indonesia's democratic transition and realizing Indonesia's strategic potential as an engine of civilizational progress throughout the Indosphere and beyond.²⁶

BACKGROUND

Religious Demography

Indonesia has a total population of more than 270 million (as of January 2020). According to the Pew Templeton Global Religious Futures Project, 87.2 percent of the total population is Muslim, 6.9 percent Protestant, 2.9 percent Catholic, and 1.7 percent Hindu. Buddhists and the practitioners of indigenous religions comprise around 1 percent of the population.²⁷ The 2018 International Religious Freedom Report estimates the Shia Muslim population at one to three million and the Ahmadiyya population at between 200,000 to 400,000.²⁸ Although various traditional beliefs or indigenous religions—known as *agama leluhur*²⁹—are officially estimated to retain only 750,000 practitioners, in reality elements of these deeply rooted, indigenous customs and sensibilities continue to inform the religious practice of, and be observed by, countless

Indonesians, including many members of the country’s Muslim majority.³⁰ There are also hundreds of different *aliran kepercayaan*, or “indigenous spiritual movements,” spread throughout the country. However, the dynamic nature of traditional beliefs from earlier times, and their continued integration with other faith traditions over time, makes it difficult to determine accurately the number of adherents of these movements. While minority communities can be found throughout the country, Papua, West Papua, East Nusa Tenggara, and North Sulawesi are predominantly Christian.³¹ Hinduism, on the other hand, is the majority religion on the island of Bali.

The Pew Research Center’s latest report on Global Religious Restrictions, which covers most of the world’s countries through 2017, finds significant religious restrictions in Indonesia. According

to Pew's index, the country's level of government restrictions is considered "very high" (at 7.9 of 10), and its level of social hostilities involving religion is considered "high" (5.9 of 10). In addition, the 2020 Annual Report by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) recommended that the U.S. Department of State place Indonesia on a Special Watch List of countries "where the government engages in or tolerates 'severe' violations of religious freedom" (a category lower in severity than the "Country of Particular Concern" category). However, Indonesia's government restrictions score for 2017 is better than the previous year (8.5 in 2016), and its social hostilities score has witnessed significant improvement of nearly three points since 2011 (when it reached a 10-year high of 8.7).³²

Historical Context

Religious freedom in Indonesia is grounded in *Pancasila*—a set of five principles formulated by the first president of Indonesia, Soekarno—in an effort to maintain national unity during Indonesia's transition to independence.³³ By excising the Jakarta Charter, which would have compelled Muslims to observe Sharia law, from the 1945 Constitution, Soekarno "unambiguously based Indonesia on nationalism rather than Islam."³⁴ The five principles of *Pancasila* are as follows:

1. [Belief in] the Divinity Who is the Great "One";³⁵
2. A just and civilized humanity;
3. The unity of Indonesia;
4. Society led by the wisdom that arises from deliberations among

and between the people's representatives;

5. Social justice for all the people of Indonesia.

While *Pancasila* itself has proven vital for defending Indonesia's pluralistic character, the inclusion of the first principle, "[Belief in] the Divinity Who is the Great 'One,'" highlights the foundational importance of religion, namely belief in one God, in Indonesian public life. The first principle is designed to signal that Indonesia is officially not a "secular state" in the modern, liberal sense of the term.

The impact on religious freedom of Indonesia's longstanding cultural and political commitment to select religious communities is somewhat ambiguous. States that regulate religious affairs, no matter their intentions, inevitably adopt a normative and definitional approach to the meaning and nature of religion. Such a state of affairs is not necessarily incompatible with a basic respect for religious freedom. But the precise policies and consequences for religious freedom depend profoundly on how the state defines and engages "religions." The approach of any government to the lived religions of particular individuals, institutions, and communities, and whether they are within or beyond the range of mainstream and recognized religions, is a crucial determinant of whether the state's laws, policies, and practices are ultimately fruitful or deleterious as far as protecting the fundamental right of religious freedom is concerned.

In the case of Indonesia, the state manages religious affairs primarily through the influential Ministry of

Religious Affairs, with a national budget that ranks fourth among all ministries. The state exercises considerable control over Indonesian Muslims in areas such as the “judiciary, family law, Islamic banking, philanthropy, and education.” It exercises some authority in the area of education over practitioners of the other five recognized religions. Moreover, “every government since independence has insisted on its power to regulate Islamic legal traditions and to retain the ultimate right to decide any religious dispute.”³⁶ As demonstrated in recent years, when the state exercises a degree of authority over religion that is widely considered legitimate, that authority has the potential to enable national and local politicians to instrumentalize religion for political purposes, especially when influenced by radical groups or swayed by public opinion. Despite the state’s formal objectives to the contrary, implementation of its authority in this area has led to a paradox of “increased religious freedom in principle but less freedom in practice and the criminalizing of heterodoxy despite official guarantees of religious pluralism.”³⁷

Islamists and other radicals opposed to Indonesian traditions of religious pluralism have at times sought to take advantage of Indonesia’s long-standing commitment to regulate religious affairs and to leverage that commitment in a manipulative and even abusive manner. Following the collapse of the Suharto regime in 1998 and the inauguration of *reformasi* (political/democratic reform), extremist Muslim civil and political organizations have re-emerged, aiming to “sharia-ize” the nation through the state’s secular structures.³⁸ Moreover, the quasi-governmental religious

body, *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (the Council of Indonesian Ulama, or MUI), has at times increased its influence by issuing *fatwas*—opinions regarding the proper implementation of Islamic law—to sway Muslim sentiment on various political, economic, and cultural matters. Some MUI *fatwas* have had a major negative impact, fostering the “minoritization” and persecution of religious communities. Examples include the Joint Ministerial Decree on Ahmadiyah (2008)^{39 40} and MUI’s *fatwa* condemning secularism, pluralism, and liberalism, which Islamists disparagingly abbreviate as *sipilis*.⁴¹ This resulted in MUI being designated as one of the top “violators of religious freedom” by the Wahid Institute.⁴² However, the influence of MUI has moderated since the 2015 Nahdlatul Ulama National Congress, with proponents of *Pancasila* pluralism within MUI becoming notably more vocal.^{43 44 45}

The balance between Muslim supremacists and *Pancasila* pluralists thus remains in flux. In addition to a political resurgence, the *reformasi* period has seen the emergence of Islamist civil society groups such as Front for the Defense of Islam (*Front Pembela Islam*, or FPI) and *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI). These groups promote an anti-*Pancasila* and anti-liberal understanding of Islam and seek to radicalize Indonesian society through a variety of activities ranging from savvy promotional campaigns highlighting the evils of pluralism, to vigilantism against religious minorities. They militate against anything they consider morally deviant, such as bars, discotheques, and gambling.

In modern, democratic Indonesia,

therefore, Islamist groups that were previously subject to political and even military repression have been able to openly draw upon and weaponize certain tenets of Islamic orthodoxy contained within the classical corpus of Islamic jurisprudence, or *fiqh*, still taught by most orthodox Sunni and Shi'ite institutions worldwide as authoritative and correct.⁴⁶ These teachings retain considerable religious authority and social legitimacy among Muslims and form part of what NU has critically termed the “prevailing Muslim mindset,” which enables unscrupulous actors to cynically weaponize Islamic texts to mobilize extremists in the service of disparate political and economic agendas.⁴⁷

Nothing stated herein should be misinterpreted to imply that *fiqh* constitutes the sole expression of, or yardstick for measuring, Islamic doctrine and practice. There are innumerable aspects of Islamic civilization and orthodoxy which are among the highest expressions of human aspiration and nobility, including its traditions of spirituality (*tasawwuf*, or Sufism); cultural refinement and social etiquette (*adab*); ethics and morality (*akhlak*); and philosophical theology, or *kalam*, which drew upon Aristotelian and neo-Platonic thought and went on to influence medieval Christian

theology. In fact, these core elements of orthodox Islam lie at the heart of *Islam Nusantara* teachings and practice.

An often-cited example of the political weaponization of Islam in Indonesia is the role Islamist groups played—in an unacknowledged alliance with opposition political parties and even certain anti-democratic elements among Indonesia’s military and Christian business community—as the face of a successful campaign to unseat the ethnically Chinese Christian governor of Jakarta, who was imprisoned for blasphemy in 2017. Whilst the persecution of religious minorities for “blasphemy” in Islamic societies is unremarkable, the fact that Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, popularly known by his nickname “Ahok,” was elected to govern the largest city in the Islamic world and the second-largest metropolitan region on earth makes Indonesia unique among Muslim-majority states. Rather than signifying an irreversible setback for religious freedom, the imprisonment of Ahok provides a case study in the long-standing tensions that exist between problematic tenets of Islamic jurisprudence that enjoin religious hatred, supremacy, and violence and Indonesia’s uniquely pluralistic, tolerant, and spiritual brand of Islam, which underpins NKRI, UUD–45, and *Pancasila*.

CHALLENGES TO RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Legal & Political Restrictions

Only six religions are officially recognized as *agama* by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Recognition by the state gives religious groups the right to establish houses of worship, obtain identity cards, and register marriages and births. Before July 2018, unofficially recognized *agama* and other *aliran kepercayaan*—i.e., indigenous and/or newly organized religious and spiritual groups—were not afforded full legal rights to religious freedom, although most were allowed to profess and operate with a measure of freedom according to their faith. Variants of Islam considered “deviant,” or *aliran sesat*, however, are not considered *agama* and face both governmental restrictions and societal hostilities. There are four general criteria required for a religion to be considered *agama*: (1) the religion must have a seer/prophet/holy figure; (2) the

religion must have a divinely conveyed message/scripture; (3) the religious community in question must have some consensus regarding established rituals; and (4) the religious community must be recognized internationally.⁴⁸ This restrictive definition of *agama* means that indigenous religious and spiritual traditions (*agama leluhur* and *aliran kepercayaan*), and other faith-based movements identified as “deviant teachings,” like Ahmadiyya and *Gafatar*, are not recognized as religions, and traditionally their adherents have not been granted full legal rights to religious freedom.

The list below highlights the four major “categories” of religion in Indonesia:

1. Six official, state-supported *agama*: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism and, since 2000, Confucianism. Official

religions enjoy full legal rights to religious freedom. Nevertheless, under certain circumstances, minorities can still encounter local social restrictions and harassment.

2. Unofficially recognized *agama*: Sikhism, the Baha'i faith, Taoism, and Judaism, among others. These religions are not listed among the six state-supported *agama*, but they are, nevertheless, still considered *agama* in that they are regarded as legitimate and their adherents are allowed to practice their faith freely.
3. Traditional belief systems or *aliran kepercayaan*: These faith traditions are not recognized as distinct religions. Since 2017, however, they have collectively been given considerably more of the protections and state resources accorded to *agama* following a widely hailed ruling from the Constitutional Court. Traditional belief groups are registered with the Ministry of Home Affairs as well as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and are further monitored by the Attorney General. Moreover, adherents of these traditional belief systems sometimes practice them along with an officially recognized state religion. Historically, certain state ministries' efforts to protect against interpretations of Islam deemed heterodox have also left traditional faiths vulnerable to societal discrimination and even prosecution under the Indonesian Criminal Code. Nonetheless, in the wake of the Constitutional Court's 2017 ruling,⁴⁹ the government is acting to extend many of the privileges of *agama* to traditional faiths. In July 2018, the

Ministry of Home Affairs recognized "*Kepercayaan terhadap Tuhan yang Maha Esa*" (Belief in God who is the Great "One") as a religious category on national identification cards, following the Court's 2017 decision. *Aliran kepercayaan*, however, will not be recognized specifically as religions (*agama*) among the state's official religions. The Ministry's 2018 statement aims to accommodate people who follow traditional beliefs and who, because of those beliefs, have encountered discrimination in accessing basic services. The Constitutional Court's decision will give these indigenous faith traditions the same legal standing as other officially recognized religions.⁵⁰ As a consequence, the state becomes fully responsible for the protection of the *aliran kepercayaan* followers in practicing their faith and propagating their teachings.⁵¹

4. Deviant beliefs or *aliran sesat*: Unlike traditional folk religions, religious groups identified as "deviant" are afforded no state recognition or protection. "[I]n contemporary Indonesia, deviant groups are, in fact, usually treated by Indonesian police, prosecutors, and courts not as legitimate spiritual beliefs outside, and independent of, the six official religions (and thus protected by *Pancasila* 'beliefs') but as deviancies within one of the official religions (and thus beyond the protection of *Pancasila*)."⁵² Examples of groups deemed "deviant" include Ahmadiyah and *Gafatar*—the latter being a religious movement with roots in Islam founded by Ahmad *Mushaddeq*, claiming to be the successor to

Muhammad. While some argue that Shia Islam is also *aliran sesat*, both the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the otherwise more conservative MUI have declared repeatedly that Shia are not *aliran sesat*, but instead are part of the global Muslim community (*umat Islam*).

Despite the state's responsibility to defend religious pluralism and freedom, the government at both the national and local level has at times introduced regulations and legislation that have the effect of limiting religious freedom. At the federal level, religious freedom in Indonesia continues to be restricted by two important laws—the 1965 Blasphemy Law and the 1969 Joint Regulation on Houses of Worship (revised in 2006). The Blasphemy Law was seldom used in its early history and, at the time of adoption, was a political maneuver undertaken by President Soekarno to secure support from landowning Muslim religious leaders who were under severe pressure from an ascendant Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI), prior to the mass killings of 1965 and 1966, which annihilated the world's third largest communist party at the height of the Cold War and the conflict in neighboring Indochina.⁵³

In more recent history, however, the Blasphemy law has posed a challenge to religious freedom. It has been exploited by Muslim extremists to justify intolerance and occasional acts of violence against minorities. While all *agama* are legally protected from such abuses, in the post-Suharto era extremist groups have exploited use of this law for political and social gain. According to Setara Institute, 89 of the 97 blasphemy cases brought to court occurred after the fall of Suharto in 1998.⁵⁴

Furthermore, data and surveys confirm that there is a “general rise of religious intolerance” throughout Indonesia, with West Java and the Jakarta metropolitan area having the highest number of “religious freedom violations.”⁵⁵

In addition to these laws, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Home Ministry have restricted two Islamic groups considered “deviant” and heretical by Muslim extremists and conservative elements within mainstream Indonesian Islam. The first restriction was issued against the Ahmadiyya in 2008. While it was not an outright ban, the decree ordered all Ahmadis “to discontinue the promulgation of interpretations and activities that are deviant from the principal teachings of Islam.”⁵⁶ The decree also instructs members of the public “not to preach, advocate, or gather public support...or to perform religious activities resembling the activities of that religion.”⁵⁷ This national decree was then replicated by some local governments, which provided an open door for extremist groups such as FPI to harass the Ahmadi community. It is also important to note that while the majority of Indonesian Muslims disapprove of violence against the Ahmadis, many moderate Muslims remain indifferent to the plight of the Ahmadiyya, regarding the group as heretical.⁵⁸ A similar ban was also passed against *Gafatar* in January 2016, which prohibited the group's activities and right to propagate. As with the Ahmadiyya, the decree against *Gafatar* was followed by harsh local government action and mob violence. The community is now disbanded and their leaders have been arrested.⁵⁹

Like the Ahmadiyya and *Gafatar*, the



Indonesian Shia community has also faced its share of “minoritization and criminalization.”⁶⁰ In 2012, 270 members of a small Shiite community in Sampang, Madura, were forcibly evicted from their village and their homes burned to the ground.^{61 62} Two people were killed by a mob, inspired by local Sunni Muslim leaders who accused them of blasphemy. Many years later, the Shia community of Sampang, which consisted primarily of farmers, are living displaced in the town of Sidoardjo, East Java. What started as a conflict between two brothers resulted in persecution of the entire community. The problem was aggravated by a *fatwa* issued by local religious authorities in the East Java chapter of MUI, in which Shia were condemned as “deviant.”⁶³ Unfortunately, with the wars in Iraq and Syria and intensifying hostility between Saudi Arabia and

Iran exacerbating Sunni-Shia tensions worldwide, anti-Shia initiatives are on the rise as a result of the increasing assertiveness of Wahhabi-inspired groups such as the *Aliansi Nasional Anti-Syiah* (National Alliance Against Shiism, ANAS), which has branches in Java, Sulawesi, and Kalimantan.

It nonetheless remains important to underscore the depth of support for the ideals of pluralism and religious freedom in Indonesia from the country’s very origins. Because of the durability and resilience of these ideals, former NU Chairman President Abdurrahman Wahid held the country together during the post-Suharto era after intercommunal violence between Christians and Muslims erupted in eight of Indonesia’s 34 provinces—particularly on the islands of Kalimantan,



the Moluccas, and Central Sulawesi.⁶⁴ Many observers believe the country's support for religious freedom and pluralism began to decline during the tenure of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, referred to as "SBY," who served from 2004 to 2014. During his two terms in office, SBY's government was accused of "being complicit in the persecution of minorities through failure to uphold laws intended to safeguard such groups, as well as by issuing regulations that impinged on religious rights."⁶⁵

For example, in 2005, President SBY addressed the National Congress of the MUI, promising the clerical body an increased role in determining government attitudes toward Islamic matters. Within days, the MUI issued the now infamous "Sipilis" *fatwa*, which condemned secularism, pluralism, and

liberalism. President SBY's government also formulated the Joint Regulation on Houses of Worship (2006) and the national anti-Ahmadiyya law (2008). SBY further emboldened Islamists politically by installing key people in the government who were hostile to religious freedom, including the Minister of Home Affairs and the Minister of Religious Affairs. The latter Minister called for an outright ban of the Ahmadiyya and Shia.⁶⁶ Overall, incidents of intimidation and Islamic vigilantism against Ahmadiyya, Shia, and Christian populations were common under SBY's presidency.

Fortunately, President Joko Widodo's government has proven to be far more committed to religious pluralism and tolerance. The 2017 CSW report commends Jokowi for "a change in tone, attitude, and approach," stating that President Jokowi had "distanced the government from radical Islamists," and, "attempted to remove some of the previous government's apparent complicity with intolerant groups."⁶⁷ Jokowi's determination to re-establish the importance of *Pancasila* pluralism can be seen in his efforts to prosecute and delegitimize Habib Rizieq of FPI and in the banning of HTI, as well as steps he has taken to recognize "local" religions. While enormous challenges still remain, progress has been substantial, especially relative to the marked deterioration in religious freedom during the Yudhoyono era. The national government remains an influential actor in determining the status of religious freedom as evidenced by Jokowi's recent ban of HTI, through a Government Regulation/Legal Amendment (*Perppu*) to override Law No. 2/2017 on Social Organizations. Jokowi's strike against HTI has been widely viewed as a political move against

anti-*Pancasila* groups backed by certain elements of the Indonesian military seeking to destabilize his government. The military as a whole, however, remains profoundly committed to *Pancasila* and the defense of NKRI against all threats, both internal and external.

In December 2017, the Indonesian Constitutional Court upheld the government's decision, and rejected the appeal by seven representatives of various organizations that supported HTI's case. The representatives who appealed to the Court maintained that no emergency dictated the necessity of the government issuing the *Perppu*.⁶⁸ The presiding judge, however, stated that the appellant's appeal had been heard and rejected. The Court's decision also came after seven political parties in the national parliament (DPR) agreed to the issuance of the *Perppu*.⁶⁹

Considering the decentralized nature of state power in post-Suharto Indonesia, it is not surprising that the Jokowi government's commitment to *Pancasila* pluralism has not been welcomed in all provinces and districts across the country. A few regional governments continue to support discrimination and violence against religious minorities—most commonly by turning a blind eye to Islamist vigilante groups and/or giving in to their demands. For example, the regional government of Aceh Singkil—which has a special autonomous status allowing it to implement Islamic law—acceded to the demands of extremists by closing 13 churches and forcing the respective communities to register for new permits.⁷⁰ The local government went further by forcing the affected congregations to adhere to a 1979 agreement limiting the number of

Christian buildings in the area to a single church and four chapels.⁷¹ The 2017 CSW report also documented a story about a pastor in Aceh Singkil being forced to flee the area after receiving death threats. Pastors in Singkil now fear that the local police are cooperating with FPI, and the pastors are equally afraid of both. Local authorities have also been directly involved as perpetrators of religious freedom violations. For example, the local mayor of Bogor continues to defy an order from the Supreme Court to reopen a church building for the GKI Yasmin Church.⁷² In West Java, authorities and the mayor of Depok have continued to enforce the closure of an Ahmadiyah mosque, shuttered since February of 2017.

The actions of these local authorities may be attributed to various factors, including:

- Local authorities, who are otherwise pro-*Pancasila*, are fearful of being branded “anti-Islam” by extremist groups. Such groups intimidate local politicians and thus prevent them from protecting religious minorities (e.g., the mayor of Bogor).
- Some local government and law enforcement officials do not share the central government's commitment to *Pancasila* pluralism and are complicit in—or even perpetrators of—religious freedom violations (e.g., the governments of Depok and Aceh Singkil).

To summarize, there appear to be two clear trends emerging in the state's treatment of religious groups. At the national level, certain actors within the central government continue to restrict the activities of religious groups they

believe are involved in religious deviancy, or otherwise pose a threat to public order. In regards to the Ahmadiyya and *Gafatar*, radical groups have attempted to pressure state authorities to persecute the groups in question and occasionally taken it upon themselves to perpetrate violence against such groups. Although governments are legally obliged to punish vigilante violence, local administrators have often demonstrated a willingness to suspend Indonesian principles and law in favor of their own short-term interests.⁷³

Again, however, the state has also pushed back against Islamist groups in the last few years, banning HTI and scrutinizing the official status of FPI. The re-election of Jokowi's government may be taken as an auspicious sign that such positive state action will continue in the coming years.

The Islamist Threat

Led by Habib Rizieq Shihab, FPI is the most influential of Indonesia's Islamist vigilante groups. After the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998, FPI and other vigilante groups presented themselves as guardians of public morality as defined by Islamic jurisprudence, intent on imposing their understanding of Islamic values upon Indonesian society as a whole. These groups often act unilaterally and violently, targeting "bars, night clubs, brothels and other places of 'immorality.'"⁷⁴ At times, they have also acted as protection rackets for the very bars, night clubs and brothels whose existence they decry. In recent years these groups have increasingly targeted religious minorities. They have focused their attacks especially on Christians as well as on "deviant" groups

they consider unorthodox, particularly the Ahmadiyya and Shia communities. Through their tactics of intimidation and violence, Islamic vigilante groups have sought to establish themselves as key players in shaping Muslim public sentiment on religious issues.

The disproportionate influence that extremist groups exercise on Islamic discourse in Indonesia—which one academic scholar has described as "a very small tail wagging a very big dog"⁷⁵—has been directly linked by NU leaders to the "weaponization of obsolete and problematic tenets of Islamic orthodoxy," which are still taught by mainstream Sunni and Shi'ite institutions worldwide. These classical Islamic teachings retain considerable religious authority and social legitimacy among Muslims throughout the world, providing Indonesian Islamist groups with a vast doctrinal repository that can be readily weaponized in the service of their political agenda.

The threat that Islamist groups pose to religious freedom in Indonesia was manifest in the 2017 electoral loss and blasphemy conviction of the Christian governor of Jakarta, Ahok. While Islamist resentment towards an "infidel" serving as mayor of the nation's largest metropolis was certainly expected, what surprised many, locally and internationally, was the sheer scale of the opposition mobilized against the governor. Ostensibly led by FPI, but actually backed and controlled by certain political and economic elites, including a prominent Chinese Christian businessman, the "National Movement to Safeguard Fatwas [Issued by] the Council of Indonesian Muslim Scholars" rallied more than

500,000 Muslims against Ahok.⁷⁶

While FPI and HTI are particularly prominent, they are not the only radical groups operating in Indonesia. Others include the Forum Umat Islam and the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia. The anti-Ahok mobilizations illustrate the potential ability of Islamist groups—when backed by highly influential elites—to shape the political attitudes of Indonesian Muslims at the expense of long-established inclusive Muslim groups such as Muhammadiyah and NU. Although extremist groups are much

smaller than the country's mainstream Muslim organizations, the scale of the Ahok protests show that the hardline organizations are at times adept at “whipping up community antipathy” toward religious minorities, and many of these groups often increase support by aiding local Muslim communities.⁷⁷

Despite these circumstances, since 2017 the Indonesian government, strongly supported by Nahdlatul Ulama, has successfully pushed back against some of the more extreme anti-Pancasila actors.⁷⁸

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Religious Freedom in the Indonesian Context

In contrast to what emerged in much of the liberal West beginning in the 18th century, the right to religious freedom in Indonesia has not been traditionally understood within the framework of individual human rights. Rather, the right to religious freedom is valued in Indonesia insofar as it guarantees national unity, social harmony, and tolerance between the major religious groups. The right to religious freedom is also premised on a concept of “group rights”—closer in spirit to the group rights recognized in the “consociational” political traditions of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland. This is evidenced by decisions of the Constitutional Court, which has ruled that the right to freedom of belief (as stipulated in Articles 28E and 29 of the revised

1945 Constitution) must be balanced with the state’s duty to “protect public safety, order, health, or morals,” and to “prevent conflict in the community.”⁷⁹ The Court also allowed the state to refer to the views of “religious parent organizations” when deciding on the acceptability of a religious group.

In other words, freedom of religion in Indonesia has often but not always been linked with the idea of “religious harmony” (*kerukunan umat beragama*).⁸⁰ This emphasis is illustrated in the Ministry of Religious Affairs’ sponsorship of Forum *Kerukunan Umat Beragama* (FKUB), comprised of representatives from different religious groups at the provincial, district, and municipal levels. The FKUB supposedly serves as the first responder to any crisis in interreligious relations in any part of the country. Although this emphasis on social

harmony was more prominent under the corporatist policies of the New Order government, it remains an influence on Indonesian political thought to this day.

The state does recognize religious freedom as a human right, but because of the state's emphasis on social harmony, individual religious freedom is often understood and balanced against the maintenance of social order and national unity. State officials tend to point to their efforts to strike the right balance between freedom and order to justify their actions against "deviant" religious practices. For many Indonesians, protecting religious freedom and targeting deviant religious practices are not necessarily contradictory priorities. In Indonesia, the protection of certain religions and controls on religious heterodoxy represent "[t]he state's overriding concern to prevent social and political conflict driven by differences of interpretation in Islam and in particular, to prevent horizontal (intercommunal) conflict from becoming 'vertical' violence directed at the state."⁸¹

Results of the 2019 Elections

President Joko Widodo won re-election to a second and final term in office by successfully mobilizing a pluralist coalition led by NU, other pro-*Pancasila* Muslims, and religious minorities. Victory in the election—which saw Jokowi expand his majority—ultimately rested upon a successful strategy to prevent the weaponization of Islam. Jokowi achieved this by recruiting a conservative NU leader, Kyai Ma'ruf Amin, who became his vice-presidential running mate, and by rebuilding the Soekarno-era coalition between *abangan* Muslims⁸² and the Nahdlatul



Ulama, whose followers in East and Central Java decisively "swung from splitting their votes between Jokowi and [his opponent] Prabowo in 2014 to overwhelmingly supporting Jokowi in 2019."⁸³ Jokowi is now term-limited and no longer has to worry about re-election, presenting an opportunity for bold policy action favoring religious freedom in Indonesia. In addition, since Jokowi's re-election, some groups formerly linked to the anti-Jokowi camp have repositioned themselves in national politics, and others have sought simply to signal their strong support for *Pancasila* pluralism.

Pro-Pancasila Organizations

Nahdlatul Ulama and, to a lesser extent, the Muhammadiyah—mass, grassroots Islamic movements with combined



followings well in excess of 100 million—continue to act as counters to much smaller, anti-*Pancasila* Islamist groups such as FPI and HTI by providing powerful theological and societal authority in support of Indonesia’s political settlement of NKRI, UUD-45 and *Pancasila*. Nevertheless, these vast Islamic movements include conservative actors, some of whom do not see non-violent restrictions on Ahmadis and other “deviant” sects as problematic.⁸⁴ The results of the Ahok election and his subsequent trial also show that these moderate Islamic organizations remain vulnerable to periodic challenge by well-organized and well-funded Islamist groups—which have been supported by Saudi Arabia and Qatar for decades—especially when the extremists are closely allied with opportunistic elements among Indonesia’s elites.⁸⁵

To address the resurgence of anti-*Pancasila* forces, in 2014 NU spiritual leaders Kyai Haji A. Mustofa Bisri and Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staquf created the *Islam Nusantara* campaign in conjunction with LibForAll Foundation’s International Institute of Qur’anic Studies and its CEO, C. Holland Taylor.⁸⁶ A viral success, the *Islam Nusantara* campaign popularized the term “*Islam Nusantara*” to describe the indigenous, tolerant forms of Islam practiced by the vast majority of Indonesians and rooted in the civilizational heritage of the Indosphere. The term *Islam Nustantara* thus provided a rallying cry that mobilized the nation’s Muslim majority—including newly elected president Joko Widodo—in defense of Indonesia’s unique brand of inclusive, multi-religious and multi-ethnic nationalism.⁸⁷

Responding to the extraordinary impact of the *Islam Nusantara* campaign, Indonesia's second largest Islamic organization, the Muhammadiyah, created its own concept of "*Islam Berkemajuan*" or "Progressive Islam." Aimed at countering the influence of anti-pluralist forces, *Islam Berkemajuan* promotes a multi-disciplinary theological, philosophical, ethical, and scientific approach to develop a new understanding of Islam that is compatible with modern life, NKRI, UUD-45, and *Pancasila*.⁸⁸

In contrast to the Muhammadiyah, NU spiritual leaders have been markedly more assertive in confronting extremist organizations on the ground. In 2017, NU organized a public campaign in support of President Jokowi's efforts to ban HTI through the *Perppu*, whilst NU's 5-million-member young adults wing, Gerakan Pemuda Ansor, launched the global Humanitarian Islam movement—a long term, systematic, and institutional campaign designed to "restore *rahmah* (universal love and compassion) to its rightful place as the primary message of Islam, by addressing obsolete and problematic elements within Islamic orthodoxy that lend themselves to tyranny, while positioning these efforts within a much broader initiative to reject any and all forms of tyranny, and foster the emergence of a global civilization endowed with nobility of character."⁸⁹

Coordinated through Bayt ar-Rahmah—a U.S.-based 501(c)(3) organization co-founded and governed by NU spiritual leaders—the Humanitarian Islam movement's foundational texts were first promulgated in 2017 and 2018 by

Gerakan Pemuda Ansor, then formally adopted and expanded upon by NU through a series of rulings at a mass gathering of nearly 20,000 Islamic scholars in 2019.⁹⁰ In a book titled *Findings of the 2019 National Conference of Nahdlatul Ulama Religious Scholars*, NU theologians: (a) analyzed the manner in which state and non-state actors around the world weaponize orthodox Islamic teachings; (b) outlined "a serious, long-term socio-cultural, political, religious and educational campaign to transform Muslims' understanding of their religious obligations, and the very nature of Islamic orthodoxy";⁹¹ (c) formally endorsed the concept of a modern nation state rather than caliphate; (d) recognized all citizens, irrespective of their ethnicity or religion, as having equal rights and obligations within a modern nation state; (e) decreed that Muslims must obey the laws of any nation in which they dwell; (f) stated that Muslims have a religious obligation to foster peace rather than wage war on behalf of their co-religionists, whenever conflict erupts between Muslim and non-Muslim populations anywhere in the world; and (g) abolished the legal category of infidel (*kāfir*) within Islamic law (*fiqh*), so that non-Muslims may enjoy full equality as fellow citizens in their own right, rather than rely on protection at the sufferance of a Muslim ruler.⁹²

In addition to securing unprecedented rulings by the world's largest Muslim organization, the Humanitarian Islam movement⁹³ has also made great strides in rallying a powerful, multi-faith coalition in support of its far-reaching program of theological reform.⁹⁴ Bayt ar-Rahmah's Director

of Religious Affairs, KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf, also acts as the Emissary of Indonesia's largest Islamic political party, PKB, to Centrist Democrat International (CDI), a coalition of over 100 center-right parties from across the globe, including the largest and most influential political party in the European Union, the European People's Party.⁹⁵ PKB was founded in 1999 by senior NU spiritual leaders—including LibForAll co-founder President Abdurrahman Wahid and Bayt ar-Rahmah co-founder KH. A. Mustofa Bisri—and acceded to full membership of CDI in 2018. To date, CDI has unanimously adopted three PKB resolutions that urge the “widespread dissemination and study” of the Humanitarian Islam movement's foundational texts and declare Humanitarian Islam, Western Humanism and Christian Democracy to be “kindred traditions” that “may serve as the foundation for a 21st century alliance to promote a rules-based international order founded upon universal ethics and humanitarian values.”⁹⁶

Both within Indonesia and internationally, the Humanitarian Islam movement is unparalleled in explicitly acknowledging and identifying problematic uses and abuses of classical Islamic teachings; outlining a viable, global strategy for achieving theological reform; socializing this program within the world's largest Islamic mass movement and among highly influential international partners;⁹⁷ and securing the adoption of concrete declarations and rulings that constitute a major break with Islamic extremism and the *fiqh* (Islamic law) upon which it depends. Bayt ar-Rahmah's devout Muslim leaders thus represent the most theologically potent and operationally effective actors promoting religious liberty in the Islamic world today, leveraging the unique strength of Indonesia's indigenous, pluralistic and tolerant understanding and practice of Islam to promote religious freedom for all.



The renowned Qur'anic injunction, “Let there be no compulsion in religion” (2:256), anticipated Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by over 13 centuries, and should serve as an inspiration to Muslim societies today, guiding them on the path to religious freedom and tolerance.⁹⁸

H.E. Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid

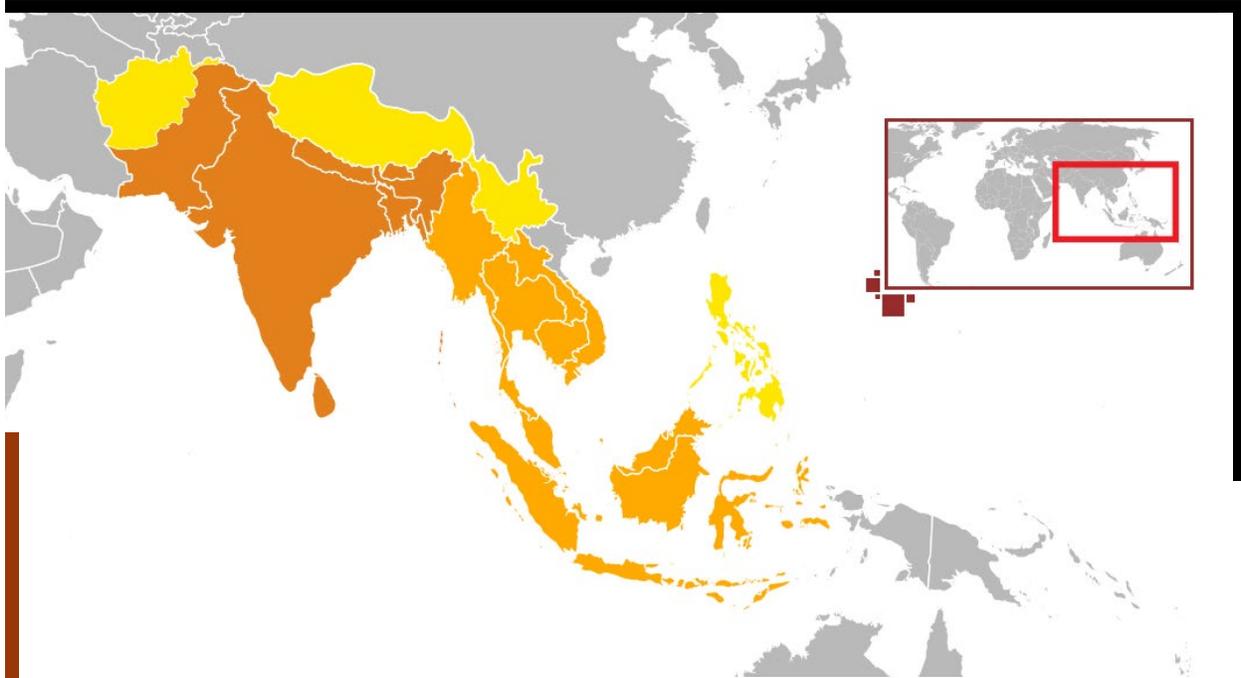
"POSITIVE DEVIANCE" WITHIN THE INDOSPHERE & THE MUSLIM WORLD

The Regional & Global Context

From 2017 to 2020, the Religious Freedom Institute's South and Southeast Asia Action Team (SSEA-AT) analyzed the religious freedom landscape in eight of the most important countries in the region. The fruit of this multi-year collaborative analysis, which drew heavily on the expertise of SSEA-AT's senior fellows along with dozens of other experts, is a monograph-length study titled: *Surveying the Religious Freedom Landscape in South and Southeast Asia: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Shaping the Present Condition and Future Direction of Religious Freedom in Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Burma, Malaysia, and Indonesia* (Washington, D.C.: Religious Freedom Institute, 2020).

The nations covered by this landscape report include the most populous and strategically significant countries of South and Southeast Asia, and approximately 86% of the region's population. These nations dominate the Indosphere—a vast geographic and cultural zone stretching from Pakistan to Indonesia. Moreover, the Indosphere constitutes the western half of the Indo-Pacific region and is thus a vital theater of competition between the world's current and emerging great powers.⁹⁹

RFI SSEA-AT's regional landscape analysis provides a detailed assessment of the current state and likely trajectory of religious freedom in each of the eight focus countries, evaluating numerous factors that influence the free exercise of religion, either positively



The Historic Indianized Cultural Zone (Indosphere)

- Indian subcontinent
- The Indianized states of Southeast Asia
- Peripheral regions subject to considerable Indian influence

or negatively. This includes not only “weaknesses” and “threats” but also “strengths” and “opportunities,” as befits a standard “SWOT” analysis. Among the factors analyzed are: government laws, regulations and policies; theological frameworks and religious beliefs; levels of social tolerance among the general population; and relevant civil society groups. The report examines these factors within the context of each nation’s unique history, culture, and politico-religious dynamics.

Although the landscape of each country is unique, many of these nations face similar challenges (e.g., ethnic and/or religious conflict), and certain geopolitical dynamics are impacting

the entire region (e.g., China’s influence operations, including the Belt and Road Initiative, and the spread of Islamist extremism). Therefore, RFI SSEA-AT’s regional landscape analysis goes beyond a series of individual country-level assessments to identify the broad characteristics of the current state and trajectory of religious freedom in the region as a whole. The two-fold purpose of this regional analysis is to elucidate what trends and causes underlie these common features and to begin to plot a constructive path toward greater religious freedom for the whole region.

One relatively unusual feature of this landscape report is that it analyzes both positive and negative aspects of religious

freedom conditions throughout the region, including “strengths,” which are generally long-term, structural and deep-seated, as well as “opportunities” that may be leveraged therefrom. In contrast, virtually all available religious freedom reports focus exclusively on where and how religious freedom is weak rather than where and how it is strong, along with “naming and shaming” bad actors. However, we can fully understand the drivers and dynamics of religious freedom violations in a particular locale only if we carefully investigate why similar locales may have better religious freedom conditions.

Too often it is assumed that religious persecution in a particular locale will disappear if we could just eliminate certain negative dynamics or suppress a few bad actors. In many cases, however, religious persecution may be occurring in one locale not only because of the *presence of negative dynamics*. It may also be occurring because of the *absence of positive dynamics* that might be present elsewhere, and which could mitigate religious persecution more widely if only they were encouraged or activated. Yet, again, we seldom study cases of robust religious pluralism and religious freedom with the same systematic seriousness with which we study cases of religious persecution.

Despite the existence of major threats and challenges to religious freedom in Indonesia, it is nevertheless home to powerful actors that are systematically and institutionally maneuvering to strengthen the prospects for religious liberty in Indonesia, the Indosphere, and the world at large. Viewed from a regional or even global perspective, Indonesia thus

embodies what scholars of child nutrition in the developing world—beginning in the 1960s and 1970s—came to describe as “positive deviance.”

As the Positive Deviance Collaborative notes, “Positive Deviance is based on the observation that in every community there are certain individuals or groups whose uncommon behaviors and strategies enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers, while having access to the same resources and facing similar or worse challenges.”¹⁰⁰ Cases of “positive deviance” are pregnant with positive examples and lessons that we seldom scrutinize, analyze, or disseminate in a form that can be of practical benefit to the cause of promoting religious freedom.

The Most Promising Indigenous Actors and Strategies within the Indosphere

RFI SSEA-AT’s operational base within the region and its years of careful networking and engagement have enabled it to identify a number of promising local religious freedom actors and strategies. At the broadest level, these investigations have led SSEA-AT to conclude that Indonesia is the South and Southeast Asian country with the greatest “cultural and spiritual capital” conducive to religious freedom.¹⁰¹ In fact, the Republic of Indonesia is built upon what Templeton Religion Trust and Dr. Christopher Seiple, founder and president *emeritus* of the Institute for Global Engagement, describe as the principles of “covenantal pluralism.”¹⁰² Indonesia’s state ideology, *Pancasila*, represents a living and enduring manifestation of covenantal pluralism

that is not only embedded within the Constitution of the largest Muslim-majority nation and democracy in the world, but also rooted in its centuries-old religious and civilizational traditions. Indeed, a strong case can be made that Indonesia provides the most striking example of “positive deviance” in an otherwise discouraging neighborhood.

Where all other countries among the eight that we have studied—Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Burma, and Malaysia—have become increasingly shaped and in many cases overrun by toxic religious nationalism and other supremacist ideologies (such as Islamism) in the last 10-20 years, Indonesia has not only preserved but successfully doubled down on its culturally and constitutionally grounded traditions of religious freedom and pluralism. Despite many severe challenges, Indonesia is now approaching its 75th anniversary of independence from Dutch colonial rule—on August 17, 2020—with a degree of commitment to religious freedom that is undeniable and impressive.

Moreover, this robust and deep-seated commitment to religious pluralism is not held merely by a few Westernized elites or isolated pockets of Indonesian society. Rather, it is actively embraced by a wide range of powerful forces, which include a majority of its political, military and business leaders, with the nation’s current president, Joko Widodo, among them; the country’s mainstream national, cultural, and religious traditions, embodied in the five pillars, or Pancasila, of the Indonesian Constitution; and powerful, broad-based religious and civil society organizations such as the Muhammadiyah and the

90-million-member Nahdlatul Ulama. The NU in particular is increasingly committed not only to defending but also to expanding the strength and scope of religious freedom in Indonesia and throughout the world.

Significantly, Indonesia is the only Muslim-majority country in the modern world that has witnessed *a dramatic increase in the size and influence of its Christian population* since it became an independent nation-state. This is in sharp and dramatic contrast to the near collapse of Christian minority populations in most of the Muslim-majority countries of the Middle East, North Africa, and even South Asia, Pakistan foremost among them.¹⁰³ RFI SSEA-AT Senior Fellow Robert Hefner underscored this point in his analysis of Indonesia for the book SSEA-AT Director Timothy Shah edited with Daniel Philpott, supported by the Templeton Religion Trust, entitled, *Under Caesar’s Sword: How Christians Respond to Persecution* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

The Under Caesar’s Sword (UCS) Project, a joint effort between the University of Notre Dame, the Religious Freedom Project at Georgetown, and the Religious Freedom Institute, has been roughly coterminous and closely conjoined with the RFI’s TRT-funded work on South and Southeast Asia, and has significantly informed SSEA-AT’s findings and proposals for further work in the region. Above all, the UCS Project highlighted that one of the most effective responses by Christian minorities to persecution world-wide is bridge-building with powerful pro-pluralism actors in the relevant majority community.¹⁰⁴ In particular, as Robert Hefner emphasizes in his treatment of Indonesia, Christians



and members of the Muslim majority community have built strong bridges of cooperation—over many decades—to create and sustain a basic cultural and political framework of religious pluralism and religious freedom. Despite significant and ongoing challenges since 1945, the result is that Indonesia’s Christian minority has experienced a remarkable degree of freedom and security. According to Hefner:

Although Christians comprise just less than 10 percent of the population, their national influence is proportionally far greater. Christians are well represented in the ranks of the middle class and university graduates; own several of the country’s largest and most respected media conglomerates; figure prominently in the ranks of artists, public intellectuals, and celebrities; and occupy mid-level or senior leadership positions in

most of the country’s non-Muslim political parties. No less tellingly, at the time of Indonesia’s declaration of independence in August 1945, Christians comprised less than 3 percent of the country’s population but were well represented in the ministerial cabinets that served during Indonesia’s vibrant parliamentary era (1950-7). The single most striking index of the community’s relative social health, however, is that in the seven decades since Indonesian independence Christians have seen their percentage share of the national population triple in size.¹⁰⁵

As one Christian leader active in Indonesian politics over the course of more than fifty years, Marsillam Simanjuntak, told Hefner in the early 2000s, “In my entire social life, I have never felt that my primary experience here in Indonesia is that of being a

minority. I have always felt like an Indonesian citizen, an equal citizen.”¹⁰⁶

It is often said that religious minorities are like the proverbial canary in the coal mine—an early and sensitive indicator of the quality of the religious freedom atmosphere in a given society. “The most certain test by which we judge whether a country is really free,” wrote Lord Acton, “is the amount of security enjoyed by minorities.” Indonesia is far from perfect. During its transition from authoritarian rule to democracy, Christians living on several islands in eastern Indonesia were engulfed in a violent conflict with Muslim neighbors that claimed approximately 10,000 lives and rendered over 500,000 people homeless.¹⁰⁷ Groups considered heretical from the standpoint of mainstream Islamic orthodoxy, such as the Ahmadiyya, are still subject to periodic abuse. Government regulations complicate and sometimes impede the construction of churches in various parts of Indonesia. Overall, however, Indonesia stands out for maintaining a distinctive socio-cultural and religious ecology vis-à-vis its minority communities, based upon the principle of *bhinneka tunggal ika*, or unity amid diversity.

Indonesia’s pluralistic social ecology is especially striking when one considers the increasingly pervasive rhetorical and physical assaults targeting religious minorities in nearly every major country in South and Southeast Asia, often with the complicity or even overt support of the highest government officials. In sharp contrast to what has unquestionably become a more toxic atmosphere for religious minorities in Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Burma, where levels of toxicity

continue to rise, the atmosphere in Indonesia remains relatively clear and healthy, enabling Christians and most other religious minorities not only to survive but to flourish.

Though many factors are at work, one crucial reason that Indonesia is a relative bright spot within the religious freedom landscape of South and Southeast Asia and the Muslim world is a single civil society organization: the Nahdlatul Ulama. Now the largest mass Islamic organization in the world, the NU was founded nearly a century ago, in 1926, almost simultaneously with the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1925 in Egypt. However, while the Muslim Brotherhood and its numerous ideological offspring—such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, Hamas, al-Qaeda and ISIS—have consistently pursued militant, integralist, and anti-pluralist agendas, with fateful consequences for Egypt and the world, the NU has become an increasingly robust and creative defender and advocate of a distinctively Indonesian vision of religious pluralism and tolerance. This vision is rooted in the country’s own unique religious tradition—that of *Islam Nusantara* (East Indies Islam).

With some 90 million followers, the NU is without parallel within the Indosphere and the Muslim world. Nahdlatul Ulama illustrates the power and significance of the proposition that underlies the RFI’s Freedom of Religious Institutions in Society (FORIS) Project: the more religious institutions are free from arbitrary state interference and repression, the more they are free to innovate, to develop according to their own spiritual logic, and ultimately to serve society. Ever since its founding, the NU has been independent, self-

organizing and free of government control. It has participated in every major phase of Indonesia's modern history and consistently determined outcomes, including the establishment of Indonesia as a multi-religious and pluralistic (*Pancasila*) nation-state; the defeat of Dutch colonialism (1945 - 49); defeat of a communist rebellion in 1948; the defeat of Islamist insurgencies, including Darul Islam (1949 - 62) and the CIA-backed PRRI-Permesta rebellion (1958 - 61); the tragedy that followed in the wake of an abortive Communist uprising in 1965, which led to the mass slaughter of suspected Communists (in which many NU leaders and members participated); and Indonesia's successful transition to democracy in the late '90s. Nahdlatul Ulama's institutional independence and deeply rooted theological commitment to serving the common good—as opposed to a narrow political program—have enabled it to develop and mature into a remarkably powerful and effective organization in defending Indonesia's traditions of religious pluralism and tolerance.

The NU's youth wing, Gerakan Pemuda Ansor, is the world's largest Muslim young adults movement. All five million of its members also belong to *Barisan Ansor Serbaguna Nahdlatul Ulama*, or Banser—an active militia force. GP Ansor constitutes the front line and primary kinetic element within Nahdlatul Ulama and the primary vehicle for the grassroots mobilization of NU followers. GP Ansor's principal mission includes the defense of NKRI (the Indonesian nation state); the 1945 Constitution, which established Indonesia as a multi-religious and pluralistic nation; *Pancasila*; *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (“Oneness Amid Diversity”);

and the profoundly spiritual—i.e., humanitarian—values of Sunni Islam, which flourished in harmony with pre-existing East Indies civilization and cultures to produce *Islam Nusantara*.

The heart of NU's strategy—articulated in a number of documents drafted by its spiritual leaders over a period of nearly a century¹⁰⁸—is to restore *rahmah* (universal love and compassion) to its rightful place as the primary message of Islam, in order to eliminate the widespread practice of using religion to incite hatred and violence towards others. To quote Christopher Seiple, the NU seeks to mobilize “the best of faith” to defeat “the worst of religion.”¹⁰⁹ As a central component of this strategy, NU spiritual leaders are developing “an Islamic jurisprudence for a global civilization, whose constituent elements retain their distinctive characteristics (*fiqh al-ḥadārah al-‘ālamīyah al-mutaṣahirah*.)” As stated in the *Nusantara Manifesto*, these NU leaders—most notably, Bayt ar-Rahmah co-founders Kyai Haji A. Mustofa Bisri and KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf—seek to “address the need for social harmony at a global level and in each of the world's regions where Muslims actually live and work, through a process of recontextualizing and ‘indigenizing’ Islam, as historically occurred in *Nusantara* (the Malay Archipelago).”

In a region where much wrong is being perpetrated by many governments and non-state actors, Indonesia is doing something right. Now is a good time for the rest of us to take note and learn all that we can from Indonesia's remarkable and multi-faceted example of “positive deviance.”

KEY ACTORS

THE GOVERNMENT

- *National Government*
- *State and Local Governments*
- *Pro-Pancasila Political Parties*
 - Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P)
 - National Awakening Party (PKB)
- *Islamist Political Party*
 - Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)
- *Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), a quasi-governmental organization comprised of representatives from various Islamic organizations.*

PRO-PANCASILA ISLAMIC GROUPS

- *Mass Organizations*
 - Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)
 - Muhammadiyah
- *Think Tanks and Advocacy Groups*
 - Wahid Foundation
 - Maarif Institute
 - Bayt ar-Rahmah
 - LibForAll Foundation
 - Gusdurian Network
 - Fahmina Institute

ANTI-PANCASILA ISLAMIST GROUPS

- Front Pembela Islam (FPI)
- Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI)
- Forum Umat Islam (FUI)
- Forum Ulama Umat Indonesia (FUUI)
- Aliansi Nasional Anti Syiah (ANAS)

PRO-PANCASILA SECULAR GROUPS

- Indonesian Human Rights Watch
- Center for Religious and Cross-Cultural Studies (CRCS), Universitas Gajah Mada
- Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS), a consortium of three Yogyakarta-based universities
- Setara Institute
- Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace

PRO-PANCASILA MINORITY GROUPS

- Communion of Churches Indonesia (PGI)
- Catholic Bishops Conference of Indonesia
- Interfidei

ACTORS WITH A FOCUS ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM¹¹⁰

01

Wahid Foundation

<http://www.wahidfoundation.org>

Year Founded	2004
Founders/Key Players	Abdurrahman Wahid (Founder), Yenny Zannuba Wahid
Type of Organization	Islamic Research Center
Mission	<p>Develop, maintain, and disseminate peaceful and tolerant Islamic values.</p> <p>Developing dialogue between local and international cultures in order to broaden the harmony of Islam with various cultures and religions in the world.</p> <p>Encourage diverse initiatives to strengthen civil society and good governance and democracy in Indonesia.</p> <p>Promote the active participation of various religious groups in building cultural dialogue and cultural understanding.</p> <p>Develop initiatives to improve social welfare and justice.</p>
Objectives/Vision	<p>The realization of H.E. KH. Abdurrahman Whaid's intellectual ideals to promote a prosperous Indonesia and world by upholding pluralism, multiculturalism, democracy, and human rights, inspired by Islamic values.</p> <p>The Wahid institute seeks to create a peaceful and just world by developing a tolerant and moderate Islamic outlook and working for the welfare of all human beings.</p>
Home Base	<p>The Wahid Foundation Jl. Taman Amir Hamzah No. 8 Jakarta - 10320, Indonesia Tel: +62 21-3928233, 3145671 Fax: +62 21-3928250</p>

Current Projects	The Wahid Foundation has multiple ongoing projects. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Campaign on Islam, Democracy, and Pluralism ◆ Capacity Building for Progressive Muslims ◆ Monitoring on Religious Issues ◆ Advocacy for Government Regulations and Minorities ◆ Center for Islam and South East Asian Studies (CISEAS)
Publications	Annual and monthly reports on Freedom of Religion have not been updated since 2013. Recent articles have been published related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
Focus	Comprehensive: Environment, Victim, Education, and Ideas
Connections	Abdurrahman Wahid led Nahdlatul Ulama from 1984-1999 before he became Indonesia's fourth President. The Wahid Foundation also has connections to like-minded local religious leaders and pesantren. Local networks include Islamic and Social Studies (LSiS), Lebak; Institute for Culture and Religion Studies (INCRES), Bandung; Institute for Social and Religious Studies (ELSA), Semarang; Center for Marginalized Communities Studies (CMARs), Surabaya; Fahmina Institute, Cirebon; The Hungry Foundation of Makassar; Institute for Islamic Law Studies (LKHI), Palembang; Institute for Humanitarian Studies (Lens), West Nusa, Tenggara.

02

Maarif Institute for Culture and Humanity <http://maarifinstitute.org>

Year Founded	2003
Founders/Key Players	Dr. Ahmad Syafii Maarif (Founder, former Chairman of Muhammadiyah), Muhd. Abdullah Darraz (Executive Director)
Type of Organization	Islamic Research Center
Mission	Advance democratic values, human rights, and diversity to restore mutual respect, cooperation, and public life for the good of Indonesians and all of humanity.
Objectives/Vision	Become an institution of advocacy and reform based on an Islamic vision of social justice for all Indonesians and the entire human community, consistent with the principles of Ahmad Syafii Maarif.

More Information

The MAARIF Institute is an integral part of the existing network of Islamic Thought Reform (PPI) movement in Indonesia. It aims to address complex challenges in a range of areas, such as democracy, human rights, pluralism, gender, interreligious dialogue, and civilization. These and many other issues require new insights into Islamic teachings and how they might be applied effectively.

MAARIF Institute's programs and activities cannot be separated from the Muhammadiyah association itself. Muhammadiyah, according to many circles, is often regarded as a representative of the modernist-moderate movement in Indonesia that actively promotes Islamic thought and practice. Therefore, fighting for the renewal of Islamic thought in the context of the Muhammadiyah movement is a major focus of the MAARIF Institute and is viewed as part of an enlightenment effort as well as an effort to *empower moderates* in Indonesia.

Home Base

Jl. Tebet Barat Dalam 2 No.6, Tebet,
South Jakarta 12810, Indonesia
Tel: + 62-21-83794554 / 60
Fax: +62-21-83795758
Mobile: 0858-9273-604

Current Projects

The MAARIF Institute has engaged in a variety of projects including policy research on radicalism in Indonesian high schools, education interventions for teachers and students, and media campaign projects.

See some of the MAARIF Institute's previous programs here:
<http://maarifinstitute.org/profil/#tab-id-2>

Publications

The MAARIF Institute has a publishing arm and has consistently released a journal series on Islamic and social thought:
<http://maarifinstitute.org/category/program/>

Focus

The MAARIF Institute engages in study and social intervention. The study consists of research and the deepening of scientific ideas through discussion and publication of books and periodical journals, while its social intervention involves advocacy and modeling right practice based on the results of previous research. In other words, MAARIF Institute combines advocacy and intellectual inquiry.

Connections

Links to Muhammadiyah and media platforms associated with the organization (TV-MU).

03

Bayt ar-Rahmah (Home of Divine Grace) <https://baytarrahmah.org>

Year Founded

2014

Founders/Key Players

Kyai Haji A. Mustofa Bisri (former Chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama Supreme Council) Chairman of Bayt ar-Rahmah; C. Holland Taylor, Deputy Chairman and COO; Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staquf, Director of Religious Affairs and General Secretary of Nahdlatul Ulama

Type of Organization

A hub for the global expansion of Nahdlatul Ulama operations.

Mission

To restore *rahmah* (universal love and compassion) to its rightful place as the primary message of Islam by addressing obsolete and problematic elements within Islamic orthodoxy that lend themselves to tyranny, while positioning these efforts within a much broader initiative to reject all forms of tyranny, and foster the emergence of a global civilization that respects universal human dignity.

Objectives/Vision

Restoring human nature to what Islam regards as its pure and original state (*fitra*)—as symbolized by the act of God breathing life into the Prophet Adam—and to eliminate the widespread practice of using religion to incite hatred and violence towards others.

Home Base

1959 N. Peace Haven Road, #357
Winston-Salem, North Carolina
27106, United States

Current Projects

The Global Humanitarian Islam Movement.

The Humanitarian Islam/World Evangelical Alliance Joint Working Group.

Engagement with Centrist Democrat International and member parties worldwide.

The Center for Humanitarian Islam (UK).

Abrahamic Faiths Initiative, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of State, Office for International Religious Freedom.

Current Projects	Engagement with Pope Francis, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), in Europe, North America, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia.
Publications	<p>International Summit of Moderate Islamic Leaders (ISOMIL) Nahdlatul Ulama Declaration (2016).</p> <p>First Global Unity Forum Declaration (with Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board, 2016).</p> <p>GP Ansor Declaration on Humanitarian Islam (with GP Ansor, 2017);</p> <p>Nusantara Statement and Nusantara Manifesto (with GP Ansor, 2018);</p> <p>Resolution on Universal Human Fraternity and Global Civilization (with Centrist Democrat International, 2019);</p> <p>Resolution on ethics and values that should guide the exercise of power (with Centrist Democrat International, 2019);</p> <p>Resolution on promoting a rules-based international order founded upon universal ethics and humanitarian values (with Centrist Democrat International, 2020)</p>
Focus	<p>International Peace and Security</p> <p>Islamic Theology</p>
Connections	Nahdlatul Ulama, Gerakan Pemuda Ansor, National Awakening Party (PKB), senior Muhammadiyah leaders, Centrist Democrat International, and the European People's Party

04

LibForAll/International Institute of Qur'anic Studies
<http://libforall.org>

Year Founded 2003

Founders/Key Players C. Holland Taylor, co-founder, Chairman & CEO; H.E. Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid (1940-2009); co-founder Kyai Haji A. Mustofa Bisri, Senior Advisor

Mission	LibForAll plans and executes its programs in cooperation with like-minded leaders in the fields of religion, education, popular culture, government, business, and the media, and is systematically building a global counter-extremism network that unites top opinion leaders in each of these fields. This, in turn, enables LibForAll to extend its reach to a grassroots level, and helps eliminate the underlying causes of terrorism by creating and propagating models for a prosperous, moderate, and tolerant Islam.
Objectives/Vision	Foster the emergence of an Islam that is at peace with itself and the modern world of democracy and human rights.
Home Base	1959 N. Peace Haven Road, #357 Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27106, United States
Current Projects	The Global Humanitarian Islam Movement (in cooperation with Bayt ar-Rahmah and Gerakan Pemuda Ansor). http://libforall.org/what-we-do/
Publications	The Illusion of an Islamic State (2011, Indonesian edition in 2009)
Focus	The development and execution of wide-ranging geopolitical and counter-terrorism strategies. Theological reform (The International Institute of Qur'anic Studies), in cooperation with Bayt ar-Rahmah, Nahdlatul Ulama, Gerakan Pemuda Ansor, and others.
Connections	Bayt ar-Rahmah, Gerakan Pemuda Ansor, senior Nahdlatul Ulama leaders, Wahid Foundation, Jaringan Gusdurian, and MAARIF Institute

05

Center for Religious and Cross Cultural Studies - Universitas Gajah Mada (Yogyakarta)
<http://crs.ugm.ac.id>

Year Founded	2000
Founders/Key Players	Dr. Zainal Abidin Bagir (Director) http://crs.ugm.ac.id/people/faculty (list of faculty)

Type of Organization	Interdisciplinary Master's Program focused on research in: (a) inter-religious relations, (b) religion, culture and nature, and (c) religion and public life.
Mission	Becoming the education and research institution in the field of culture and inter-faith tolerance development, which supports the democratic and multi-cultural Indonesian community.
Objectives/Vision	<p>The Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies (CRCS) at the Graduate School, Gadjah Mada University, in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, was established in 2000 as the only interdisciplinary academic program focusing on religious studies at a non-religiously affiliated university in Indonesia. Students and faculty at CRCS come from diverse religious and disciplinary backgrounds, creating an environment of lively and critical exchange on the study of religion in an array of cultural contexts. Its more than 250 alumni are now working in Islamic, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, and non-religious educational institutions and civil society organizations, in Indonesia and abroad.</p> <p>The academic work of the Center is focused in three main areas of study: (a) inter-religious relations; (b) religion, culture, and nature; and (c) religion and public life. These areas are reflected in the courses offered as well as directions of its research. Since early in its history, the Center has been a leader in research and publications on a number of topics, such as religion and politics, religious freedom, management of religious diversity, interreligious dialogue, religion and science, religion and ecology, indigenous religions, etc.</p> <p>CRCS is also a public education hub, which works to disseminate its research findings to the public and develop different types of programs such as teaching diversity to high school students and inviting NGO activists, journalists, and academics to its "diversity management school" two-week seminars. The Center is a dedicated to investigating the role that religion plays in society and advocating a multicultural, just, and democratic Indonesia.</p>
Home Base	<p>Gedung Sekolah Pascasarjana UGM Lantai III—IV Jl. Teknik Utara, Pogung, Yogyakarta, Indonesia 55281 Telephone/Fax: + 62-274-544976 Email: crcs@ugm.ac.id Contact Person: Linah Pary Email: lina_pary@yahoo.com</p>
Current Projects	Master's Program (http://crcs.ugm.ac.id/program-overview).

Current Projects	<p>Research (http://crcs.ugm.ac.id/research-overview)—CRCS is currently undertaking research on several topics, such as: (a) Demography of Religion in Kalimantan; (b) The Practice of Interreligious Marriage Law in Indonesia; (c) Religious Life Serial Report: Local Religion; (d) the potential for reconciliation between religious groups in West Java; and (e) Practices of Multicultural Education in Schools in Yogyakarta.</p> <p>Public Education (http://crcs.ugm.ac.id/public-education-overview#)—non-degree courses and summer school.</p>
Publications	<p>Annual Reports (http://crcs.ugm.ac.id/annual-reports)—last updated 2014.</p> <p>Monographs (http://crcs.ugm.ac.id/monographs)—last updated 2011.</p> <p>Book Publishing (http://crcs.ugm.ac.id/books)—Active as recently as June 2017.</p> <p>Newsletter (http://crcs.ugm.ac.id/newsletter)—Active and published monthly.</p>
Focus	Education and ideas.
Connections	ICRS UGM (the doctoral program)

06

Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace <http://setara-institute.org>

Year Founded	2005
Founders/Key Players	Hendardi, Ismail Hasani, Bonar Tigor Naipospos, and others
Type of Organization	Human Rights Research and Advocacy
Mission	SETARA Institute is an organization that was founded by individuals who were dedicated to the idea that everyone should be treated equally, while respecting diversity, giving priority to solidarity, and upholding human dignity. It was founded by people who would like to eliminate discrimination and intolerance on the basis of religion, ethnicity, tribe, skin color, gender, and other social statuses, and promote solidarity with the weak and victims.

Objectives/Vision	<p>Setara Institute's goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To promote pluralism, humanitarianism, democracy and human rights ◆ To study and advocate pluralism, human-centered public policy, democracy and human rights ◆ To launch a dialogue on conflict resolution ◆ To undertake public education activities
Home Base	<p>Jl. Hang Lekiu II No. 41 Kebayoran Baru, Jakarta Selatan 12120 Phone: (6221) 7208850 Hp: 085100255123 Fax: (6221) 22775683 E-mail: setara@setara-institute.org</p>
Current Projects	<p>The Setara Institute focuses on multiple research areas: religious freedom, preventing violent extremism, rule of law, business and human rights, and human security. Current projects involving religious freedom (http://setara-institute.org/kebebasan-beragama/) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Monitoring of Violations of Freedom of Religion / Belief in 22 provinces. ◆ Publication of Condition of Freedom of Religion / Belief since 2007. ◆ Investigation of violation case of Freedom of Religion / Belief. ◆ Advocacy of legislation and public policy. ◆ Diversity education for students and teachers in 6 provinces. ◆ Educational capacity building for victims of violations of freedom of religion / belief in three provinces. ◆ Campaigning tolerance and initiating International Day celebrations for Tolerance.
Publications	<p>Recently published thematic report: "Security & Protection of Ahmadiyya in Indonesia," http://setara-institute.org/category/publikasi/laporan-tematik/.</p> <p>Other Malay-language reports.</p> <p>Press releases (http://setara-institute.org/category/press-release/).</p>
Focus	<p>Education and Ideas.</p>
Connections	<p>Wahid Institute, PUSAD Paramadina, CRCS, Maarif, Kontras, AGPAI, etc.</p>

07

Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP)

<https://www.facebook.com/ICRP4Peace/>

Year Founded	2000
Founders/Key Players	Siti Musdah Mulia (http://www.salzburgglobal.org/people.html?userID=6220&eventID=7277)
Type of Organization	Inter-religious peacebuilding
Mission	The Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP) is a non-profit organization with an interest and concentration in religious peace.
Objectives/Vision	Achieving peace and prosperity in Indonesia in the context of the country's religious pluralism.
Home Base	Jalan Cempaka Putih Barat XXI No. 34 Jakarta Pusat 10520 Indonesia 62 21 4280 2349 / 4280 2350 icrp@cbn.net.id
Current Projects	ICRP conducts many regular projects, ranging from language courses (Arabic and Hebrew) to inter-faith discussions.
Focus	Ideas, education, and environment.
Connections	The Wahid Institute, Nurcholis Madjid Society, Konferensi Agung Sangha Indonesia (KASI)/Buddhist Organization, Majelis Buddhayana Indonesia/Buddhist Organization, Persekutuan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia—PGI/Church Council

08

Institute for Inter-Faith Dialogue in Indonesia (Interfidei)

<https://www.globalministries.org/interfidei>

Year Founded	1991
Founders/Key Players	The late Th. Sumartana, Ph.D.; the late Rev. Eka Darmaputera, Ph.D.; Daniel Dhakidae, Ph.D.; the late Zulkifly Lubis; and Djohan Effendi, Ph.D.

Type of Organization	Inter-religious peacebuilding
Mission	<p>Placing religions in their proportions and reinforcing Indonesian values in religious practices through education, dialogue, network reinforcement, deployment of reconciliation and non-violence narration, and advocacy.</p> <p>Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Developing research and education that fosters awareness of religious attitudes toward pluralism, and researching and socializing religious pluralism. ◆ Building networks of individuals and organizations willing to undertake inter-religious peacebuilding. ◆ Prompting interfaith groups to promote social movements based on peaceful, democratic means.
Objectives/Vision	Realizing a pluralistic, democratic, and equitable Indonesia, which is free from fear, oppression, and discrimination, values of peace and reconciliation.
Home Base	<p>Jl. Banteng Utama No 59 Perum Banteng Baru, Sleman, Yogyakarta 55581 INDONESIA Telp +62-274-880149 Fax +62-274-887864 Email: dianinterfidei@interfidei.or.id / dianinterfidei@yahoo.com</p>
Current Projects	<p>Interfidei extends its programs over other parts of the archipelago and does not center its programs merely on Yogyakarta. The programs facilitate collaboration with its networking groups and take the following forms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Education ◆ Discussion via national seminars and national/international conferences. ◆ Research ◆ Publication ◆ Library and documentation development ◆ Networking, information, and communication advancement ◆ Human resource development <p>Last updated project involved a seminar on the dynamics and challenges of religious pluralism in Yogyakarta</p>
Focus	Ideas, education, and environment.
Connections	Fahmina Institute and Religion for Peace International

09

Fahmina Institute <http://fahmina.or.id>

Year Founded	2000
Founders/Key Players	KH Husein Muhamad, Marzuki Wahid, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, Addandi Mochtar (http://fahmina.or.id/en/staff/)
Type of Organization	Islamic activism
Mission	<p>To develop and propagate critical discourse around religion, directed towards social change that is fair and just.</p> <p>To encourage the creation of a society that is democratic and tolerant of ethnic, class, gender, and religious differences.</p> <p>To empower oppressed communities through education and access to key resources.</p>
Objectives/Vision	The realization of a society that is critical in its thinking, open in its attitudes, fulfilled in its dignity, and just in its laws.
Home Base	Jl. Swasembada No. 15 Majasem-Karyamulya Cirebon +62 231 8301548
Current Projects	<p>Since being established in November 2000, Fahmina Institute has been synonymous with activism in social religious studies and supporting marginalized communities. Through the many programs Fahmina runs in the local and wider communities, we strive to create a just social structure, in which every person is empowered and possesses the same opportunities, politically, socially and culturally.</p> <p>Fahmina has four departments responsible for running these programs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Islam and Gender◆ Islam and Democracy (People's Voter Education Network)◆ Islam and Community Empowerment (Developing Community-based Islamic Humanitarian Journalism)◆ Centre for Data, Information and Media
Publications	Not updated since 2009

Focus	Ideas, education, and environment.
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Connections	https://fahmina.or.id/mitra-kerja/
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10

Gusdurian Network Indonesia (GNI) <http://www.gusdurian.net>

Year Founded	2010
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Founders/Key Players	Alissa Wahid
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Type of Organization	A network of grassroots activists and organizations that seeks to promote the values “inherited” from Gus Dur. The Gusdurian Network focuses on the synergy of practical, non-political work covering four major dimensions: Islam and Faith, Culture, State, and Humanity.
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Mission	Gus Dur’s values, thought, and struggle survived and guarded the Indonesian nationalist movement through the synergy of the work of his followers. Gus Dur’s nine core are the basis of the Gusdurian Network: Ketauhidan, Humanity, Justice, Equality, Liberation, Brotherhood, Simplicity, Tradition Wisdom, and “Knight Attitudes” or chivalric principles of safeguarding the weak.
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Objectives/Vision	Creating and propagating Moderate Islam based on Gus Dur’s values.
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Home Base	Jl. Taman Amir Hamzah 8 Pegangsaan, Jakarta Pusat, Indonesia 12000 Timoho GK IV/985, RT 85, RW 20 Gendeng, Yogyakarta, Indonesia 55000 Hotline: (62) 8214 123 2345 Email: jaringan.gusdurian@gmail.com Website: http://gusdurian.net and www.gusdur.net Twitter: @gusdurians Facebook: Jaringan Gusdurian Facebook fanpage: KH Abdurrahman Wahid
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Current Projects	Gusdurian recently published an online magazine, Gusdurpedia.
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Publications	Website featuring articles written by members of the Gusdurian network can be found here: http://www.gusdurian.net/id/ .
Focus	Ideas, education, and environment.
Connections	Aktivis Muda Nahdlatul Ulama/Youth Activists of Nahdlatul Ulama, Nahdlatul Ulama

11	Human Rights Watch Indonesia/HRW Indonesia https://www.hrw.org/asia/indonesia
Year Founded	1988
Founders/Key Players	Andreas Harsono (https://www.hrw.org/about/people/andreas-harsono , http://www.andreasharsono.net)
Type of Organization	Indonesian branch of Human Rights Watch
Mission	HRW directs its advocacy toward the laws, policies, and practices of governments, armed groups, and businesses. To ensure its independence, HRW refuses government funding and corporate ties. HRW partners with organizations large and small across the globe to protect embattled activists, to help hold abusers accountable, and to bring justice to victims.
Objectives/Vision	HRW is an independent, international organization that works as part of a vibrant movement to uphold human dignity and advance the cause of human rights for all.
Home Base	Jakarta
Current Projects	HRW Indonesia is currently advancing the #BreakTheChains campaign. This movement aims to call on the Indonesian government to monitor and end the practice of shackling inside institutions.
Publications	Race, Islam, and Power: Ethnic and Religious Violence in Post-Suharto Indonesia (2019), HRW Report on Indonesia (2019).
Focus	Ideas and education

Connections

Andreas Harsono is also the founder of the Pantau Foundation, an organization that trains Indonesian journalists and reporters on how to report on issues such as religious violence. Andreas can also be contacted through Ben Rogers of CSW.

12
**Communion of Churches in Indonesia/
Persekutuan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia (PGI)**
<http://pgi.or.id>
Year Founded

1950

Founders/Key Players

A list of PGI's leaders can be found here: <https://pgi.or.id/susunan-mph-pgi/>

Type of Organization

National Council of Protestant Churches in Indonesia. A list of member churches in the PGI can be found here: <https://pgi.or.id/gereja-anggota-pgi/>.

Mission

Develop a communion that stands up for justice, peace, and public welfare.

Objectives/Vision

The communion aims to see churches grow spiritually, become more respectful towards others, and be more consistent and caring about common problems within the community, such as extremism, environmental problems, and poverty. Additionally, the communion seeks to build more partnerships and collaboration within and outside the community (in the spirit of ecumenism).

Home Base

Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI)
Jl. Salemba Raya No. 10
Central Jakarta (10430)

Phone: (021) 3150151
Email: pgi@pgi.or.id, info@pgi.or.id

Current Projects

Training of Trainers (ToTs) De-radicalization: Religious Counter Radicalism and Terrorism.

Trainings for Interfaith Youth (to build interfaith youth communities).

National Interfaith Youth Gathering (Temu Kebangsaan Kaum

Current Projects	<p>Muda Indonesia) in collaboration with interfaith organizations.</p> <p>Seminar and Workshop on Religions (Annual Seminar).</p> <p>Publications (Books and Short Films on Interfaith and Cross-Cultural Issues).</p> <p>Interfaith Dialogues and/or Visits.</p> <p>Interfaith Forum on Ecological Issues, in collaboration with some interfaith and environmental organizations.</p> <p>Interfaith Reflection and Prayer on HIV and AIDS Issue (Annually, every May and December).</p> <p>Interfaith Reflection and Prayer on Disaster Issues.</p>
Publications	A list of PGI documents can be found here: https://pgi.or.id/dokumen-pgi-2/
Focus	Ideas and environment.
Connections	<p>http://pgi.or.id/lembaga-mitra-pgi-dalam-negeri/ (connections with Indonesian organizations)</p> <p>http://pgi.or.id/lembaga-mitra-pgi-luar-negeri/ (connections with international organizations)</p>

13

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Indonesia/ Konferensi Waligreja Indonesia (KWI) <http://www.kawali.org>

Year Founded	1955
Founders/Key Players	http://www.kawali.org/about-kwi/presidium-kwi/
Type of Organization	Catholic Bishops Conference
Mission	<p>To support the Catholic community in practicing their faith.</p> <p>To continue and develop more interfaith discussion which aims to create a more peaceful and tolerant society;</p> <p>To build strong partnerships with all organizations, from the government to NGOs in order to support the humanitarian vision of Catholic churches</p>

Objectives/Vision	Strong relationship and partnership among all Indonesian bishops
Home Base	Jl. Kemiri 15, Jakarta 10350 (021) 39124320
Publications	Kawali regularly published series of news and articles about the Church and Catholic community development called 'Seri Dokumen Gerejawi'
Focus	Education
Connections	PGI, Persekutuan Baptis Indonesia







INDONESIA

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis is a structured planning method that evaluates a given organization, program, or project in each of these areas. What follows is a SWOT analysis for religious freedom for Indonesia.

STRENGTHS

What does the country do well with regard to religious freedom? What areas are vibrant, positive, and healthy when it comes to religious freedom in the country?

- ◆ There exist strong, authentically indigenous historical and cultural precedents for religious freedom in Indonesia grounded in the ideals of *Pancasila* pluralism, Indonesia's multireligious nationalism, and *Islam Nusantara* ("East Indies Islam").
- ◆ For generations, virtually every public school in Indonesia has taught the principles of *Pancasila*, at every level from kindergarten through 12th grade. *Pancasila*, which reflects Indonesia's civilizational heritage of religious pluralism and tolerance, is now embraced and supported by a majority of Indonesians, Muslim and non-Muslim alike.
- ◆ Indonesia is an inclusive, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic society grounded in a general culture of tolerance and a spirit of national pride.
- ◆ Nadhlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah are strong advocates of *Pancasila* pluralism and Indonesia's moderate and inclusive version of Islam. These mass organizations provide considerable theological and social grounding and legitimacy for an inclusive and moderate understanding and practice of Islam..
- ◆ Indonesia possesses a large number of local and national civil society organizations committed to religious pluralism and tolerance. While these organizations may have differing views on the question of universal religious freedom (e.g., whether to permit organized proselytism) most of these organizations agree that an alliance between Islamist political parties such as PKS, extremist anti-*Pancasila* groups such as HTI and FPI, and an ever-shifting constellation of opportunistic political, military, and economic elites poses the biggest threat to religious freedom in Indonesia.

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- ◆ The national government's ban on HTI shows that President Jokowi is aware of the threat posed by this alliance between anti-*Pancasila* Islamist groups and various Indonesian elites.
- ◆ Ministry of Religious Affairs officials have discussed the possibility of expanding the number of religious traditions officially acknowledged as *agama* ("religions") and thus deserving of full state protection. Since 2017 the Ministry has also taken far-reaching and impressive steps to extend educational support and political protections for those Indonesians who profess a "local religion" (*agama lokal*) or "belief in God, the Great 'One'" (*kepercayaan terhadap Tuhan yang Maha Esa*).
- ◆ There exists a broad spectrum of religious and non-religious actors that continue to advocate for *Pancasila* pluralism and universal religious freedom for all. Some organizations, such as the Wahid Foundation, the Maarif Institute, LibForAll, Bayt ar-Rahmah, the Gusdurian Network, and Setara Institute, are internationally renowned.
- ◆ The leader of FPI, Habib Rizieq Shihab, remains under investigation for breaking Indonesian laws on pornography, hate speech and other felonies. He is currently in Saudi Arabia and has chosen not to return to Indonesia for fear of being criminally charged. The national FPI organization remains vigorous, but its destabilizing capacities have been diminished considerably.

WEAKNESSES

What does the country do less well when it comes to religious freedom? What are the country's areas of weakness when it comes to religious freedom? What other factors, domestically and internationally, inhibit the development of religious liberty?

- ◆ The national government still seems reluctant to review and revise laws detrimental to religious freedom such as the Blasphemy Law and anti-Ahmadiyya or anti-Shia decrees.
- ◆ Although recognized as official *agama*, the adherents of minority religions at times encounter various forms of discrimination by state officials and society at large.

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- ◆ Discrimination against and/or persecution of minority groups, including Ahmadiyya, Shiites, and Christians, remain among the most serious religious freedom issues in Indonesia. Another major issue is the requirement that all Indonesian citizens list an official religion upon their identification cards.
- ◆ There is a tendency for international actors, both in the Middle East and the West, to regard *Islam Nusantara* as less “legitimate” than expressions of Islam practiced in the Middle East. This attitude facilitates the spread of ultraconservative Sunni Islam, whose basic tenets are inimical to religious freedom, and simultaneously inhibits the West from supporting those elements within Islam that offer the greatest hope for theological reform and religious freedom throughout the Muslim world.
- ◆ A variety of factors, including political correctness and identity politics, have prevented major actors in the West from acknowledging and addressing certain legacies within classical variants of Islamic law that severely restrict religious freedom. By avoiding hard theological conversations on this topic, while simultaneously prioritizing their economic and geopolitical interests in the Middle East, Western powers have been effectively complicit in the global spread of ultraconservative Islam for decades, thereby undermining pluralistic and tolerant expressions of Islam indigenous to Indonesia and other parts of South and Southeast Asia.
- ◆ These same factors inhibit the sweeping legal and ethical reforms that are a precondition for substantial progress on religious freedom in Indonesia and elsewhere in the Muslim world.
- ◆ Western media, as well as religious freedom analysts and advocates, tend to favor simplistic narratives that encourage a binary view of nations and the diverse actors therein. For example, the 2017 electoral defeat of the Chinese Christian governor of Jakarta and his subsequent conviction on charges of blasphemy have resulted in a majority of Western observers overlooking other, positive trends in Indonesian society.
- ◆ Western perceptions of Indonesia are often shaped by this binary tendency and accompanied by a distorted analysis of realities on the ground, as reflected in the annual Pew Global Religious Restrictions Report. In this report, Indonesia’s Government Restrictions Index (GRI) and Social Hostilities Index (SHI) ratings are consistently higher than those of most Arab states. This is due partly to Indonesia’s enormous population and relatively open democratic society, in which data can generally be collected and

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shared freely. It is also due to the Pew Report's failure to accurately weigh factors such as the freedom to change one's religion and practice it in public; the freedom of religious institutions to act independently of government; and the absence of any one established or officially favored religion. These "core freedoms" lie at the heart of Indonesia's constitutional system, continuously in place since 1945, and are embraced by a majority of Indonesians. Each of these core freedoms is noticeably absent in the Arabic-speaking world, yet most Middle Eastern states, including Saudi Arabia (which does not allow the building of churches and enforces the death penalty for apostasy), have a lower GRI rating than Indonesia. These essential facts about Indonesia are scarcely known in the West, due to the aforementioned binary tendency and distorted analysis by institutions such as Pew.

- ◆ Due to the vagaries of history—what is now Indonesia was, for centuries, part of the Dutch East Indies—few Indonesians are sufficiently fluent in English to promote their views upon the world stage, unlike Indians, Pakistanis, Malaysians, etc., who have long historic experience with British institutions and the English language. This, in turn, has inhibited the export of Indonesia's "cultural and spiritual capital," while facilitating the spread of Islamism by militants from South Asia and other regions who are fluent in English.¹¹¹

OPPORTUNITIES

What trends can the country take advantage of to promote religious freedom? What changes can be harnessed to promote religious freedom?

- ◆ The *Islam Nusantara* (Nahdlatul Ulama), *Islam Berkamajuan* (Muhammadiyah), and Humanitarian Islam (Gerakan Pemuda Ansor/Bayt ar-Rahmah) movements represent the most dynamic opportunities available to promote religious freedom in Indonesia and the wider Muslim world.
- ◆ The convincing victory by President Joko Widodo in the April 2019 elections provides an excellent opportunity to consolidate and expand religious freedom protections across the country and to weaken violent religious extremism and other forces inimical to religious freedom and tolerance. Jokowi's convincing victory—in which he took the majority of votes nationwide and won 21 of Indonesia's 34 provinces—puts him in a

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strong political position to advance his more pluralistic and tolerant vision of Indonesia. This victory, moreover, occurred amidst record voter turnout of about 80 percent.

- ◆ Until the next presidential elections in 2024, which the constitution prohibits him from contesting, President Widodo has a chance to use the considerable power of the Indonesian presidency to promote greater respect for religious freedom and religious tolerance both in the country's culture and in its legal and political structures.
- ◆ In the last few years, and particularly since the jailing of Ahok for blasphemy in 2017, Indonesia's largest Muslim civil society organization, Nahdlatul Ulama, and organizations closely affiliated with it—such as Gerakan Pemuda Ansor (NU's young adults movement), Fatayat (NU's young adult women's movement) and Bayt ar-Rahmah—have become increasingly creative, assertive, and influential in opposing Islamism and promoting greater religious freedom and religious tolerance in Indonesia and beyond.

THREATS

What are the actual, imminent, or emerging threats to religious freedom in the country? In other words, what are the “clear and present dangers” and potential challenges that undermine—or threaten to undermine—religious freedom?

- ◆ A constantly shifting de facto alliance between Islamist political parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated PKS, extremist anti-*Pancasila* groups including HTI and FPI, and opportunistic elites poses the greatest threat to religious freedom in Indonesia.
- ◆ This threat is exacerbated by decades-long and continuing financial support of Islamism by the government of Saudi Arabia and influential private Salafiyah foundations in Qatar, among other state and non-state actors, and the intervention of these foreign entities in Indonesia's electoral processes.
- ◆ Indonesia's policy of recognizing six official religions discriminates against adherents of those religions not identified as *agama* by the government, as well as adherents perceived to observe and practice heterodox interpretations of a recognized religion,

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particularly Islam. The government has gone beyond discrimination and also subjected this latter group (notably Ahmadiyah) to various forms of repression.

- ◆ Anti-*Pancasila* Islamist groups pose a particular challenge to religious freedom. Though Prabowo lost the 2019 election, the Islamist movement that supported his Presidential candidacy in 2014 and 2019 continues to oppose equal citizenship, religious pluralism, and tolerance in Indonesia..
- ◆ Though Jokowi's victory in the April 2019 elections is an encouraging development and provides real opportunities to consolidate and advance religious freedom, the lead-up to the elections and the election outcome itself point to a number of significant challenges and threats. Above all, the run-up to the elections witnessed a surge of Islamist/exclusivist populism. The eagerness with which certain Indonesian elites have harnessed this populism (e.g., the campaign against Jokowi's ally, Ahok) represents a serious long-term threat to Indonesia's democracy and to progress on religious freedom.
- ◆ Though counter-intuitive at first glance, the divisiveness of the 2019 campaign and the election result suggest reasons for continued vigilance. Despite the fact that Jokowi's decisive victory was an encouraging overall outcome, "analysis of the geographic and demographic breakdown of votes shows a sectarian divide: Jokowi won by overwhelming numbers in all non-Muslim-majority provinces and suffered heavy losses in many of the most staunchly Muslim regions." While Jokowi's victory provides an opportunity to advance religious freedom and tolerance, this deeper analysis of the country's voting patterns suggests that Jokowi has not been entirely successful in rallying non-Javanese Muslims around his agenda, including his support for greater religious tolerance. Even more broadly, "[t]his hardening of voting patterns along religious, ethnic, and geographic lines is troubling for a multiracial and religiously diverse Indonesia."¹¹²
- ◆ There is a growing danger, particularly as Jokowi's presidency moves into a lame-duck phase, that competing political elites will employ Islamist ideology and movements to bolster their efforts to prevail in the 2024 elections and thereby trigger widespread instability, which could severely undermine religious freedom in general and the security of religious minorities in particular.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER REPORT

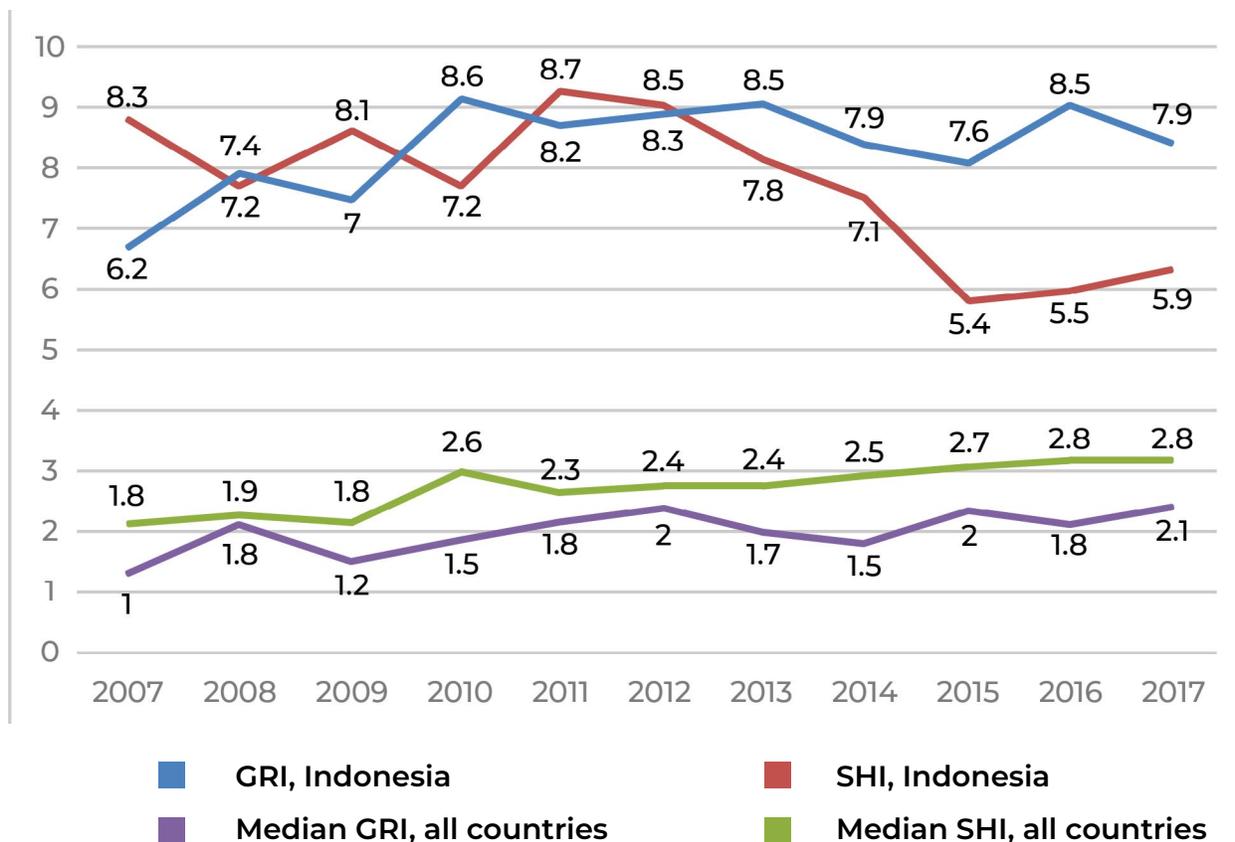
RESTRICTIONS ON RELIGION, 2007-2017

Since 2009, the Pew Research Center has released an annual report¹¹³ on restrictions of religious freedom around the world. The Pew report uses a 10-point index to rate 198 countries and self-governing territories based on a Pew-designed Government Restrictions Index (GRI) and Social Hostilities Index (SHI).

The GRI measures government restrictions on religious actors, ranging from favoring one religion over another to outright bans on a particular religion. Indonesia received a “very high” score of 7.9 on the GRI in 2017, but this represented an improvement over its GRI score in 2016, which was 8.5.¹¹⁴

The SHI measures hostilities towards religion by non-state actors ranging from harassment to attacks in the name of religion. Indonesia’s SHI score has been in the “high” range, but it has seen a significant and steady downward trend from its peak of 8.7 in 2011 to a low of 5.4 in 2015. It has remained consistently below 6.0 since, though it ticked up to 5.9 in 2017.¹¹⁵ See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Restrictions on Religion in Indonesia (GRI & SHI) 2007-2017





ENDNOTES

1 Timothy Samuel Shah et al., *Religious Freedom: Why Now? Defending an Embattled Human Right* (Princeton, New Jersey: Witherspoon Institute, 2012), pp. 13-16. See also Timothy Samuel Shah and Jack Friedman, eds., *Homo Religiosus?: Exploring the Roots of Religion and Religious Freedom in Human Experience* (New York & Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

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11 Yahya Cholil Staquf, “The Enduring Threat of Islamist Politics in ‘Reformasi’ (Post-Soeharto Indonesia) and its global ramifications,” *Jakarta Post*, special edition with contributions by diverse experts reflecting upon twenty years of “*reformasi*” (political reform), The Jakarta Post, May 22, 2018, https://www.libforall.org/lfa/media/2018/jakarta-post_enduring-threat-of-Islamist-politics-in-reformasi-Indonesia-and-its-global-ramifications_05-22-18.pdf.

12 The following points of clarification regarding this report’s references to certain “tenets of Islamic orthodoxy,” and Islamists’ appropriation thereof, are necessary:

(1) By referring to “orthodoxy” the report is not claiming that the tenets in question are normatively superior and/or inherently central to Islam, or that Islam, per se, is inextricably or integrally connected to or defined by these tenets. Orthodoxy in any given religion is historically and culturally contextual, and is subject to sometimes significant variation and development. This report aims to describe certain tenets of Islamic orthodoxy—closely related to classical Islamic law, or *fiqh*—that have been given weight and authority in many historical and cultural contexts, and continue to exert enormous influence to this day. But this effort to describe orthodoxy differs profoundly from the act of prescribing what is truly orthodox in a normative and theological sense, which this report does not presume to do.

(2) At no point does this report intend to suggest that Islamist interpretations of the Muslim faith have a superior claim to Islamic orthodoxy, or that Islamic orthodoxy is somehow fixed and immutable. The report does suggest that Islamists are preoccupied with achieving certain political and ideological objectives, which makes them closer in some respects to 20th-century European corporatist fascists (who vested absolute authority in a centralized state) than they are to the spirit of many Muslim communities through the ages. A careful review of the range of Islamic legal and ethical traditions points to a multi-centered network of *ulama* as the source of authority for upholding forms of political, social and spiritual life that align with Islamic law.

(3) To describe these tenets of Islamic orthodoxy as “widely accepted” is not to assert that they are accepted by all or even a majority of Muslims in the world. Rather, the claim is that these tenets are not merely marginal or uncommon but enjoy a kind of normativity, particularly in the Middle East, which continues to exercise a disproportionate influence on Islamic thought globally.

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92 Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staquf, et al, *Hasil-Hasil Musyawarah Nasional Alim Ulama Nahdlatul Ulama 2019 (Findings of the 2019 National Conference of Nahdlatul Ulama Religious Scholars*, Jakarta: Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board, 2019).

93 Joe Cochrane, “Indonesians Seek to Export a Modernized Vision of Islam,” *New York Times*, May 1, 2017, https://www.baytarrahmah.org/media/2017/nyt_Indonesians-Seek-to-Export-a-Modernized-Vision-of-Islam_05-01-17.pdf. The article appears with the following sub-head: “The youth wing of Nahdlatul Ulama, an Indonesian Islamic group, is pressing governments around the world to bring Islamic law into line with 21st-century norms.”

94 2020 Pope Francis trip to Indonesia, East Timor, and Papua New Guinea possible,” *Catholic News Agency*, January 17, 2020, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/2020-pope-francis-trip-to-indonesia-east-timor-and-papua-new-guinea-possible-25661>. As the article states, “Sheikh Yahya Cholil Staquf leads the 50 million member Nahdlatul Ulama movement, which calls for a reformed ‘humanitarian Islam’ and has developed a theological framework for Islam that rejects the concepts of caliphate, Sharia law, and ‘kafir’ (infidels).” The article continues: “Staquf met with the pope this week, while in Rome for a meeting of the Abrahamic Faiths Initiative, which gathers Christians, Muslim and Jewish leaders to discuss the promotion of peace and fraternity. U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback attended the meetings.”

95 European People’s Party, “History,” <https://www.epp.eu/about-us/history/>.

96 See Centrist Democrat International, *Resolution on acknowledging that universal human fraternity is essential to the emergence of a global civilization founded upon respect for the equal rights and dignity of every human being*, adopted in Brussels, April 10, 2019; *Resolution on the consolidation of a global consensus regarding key ethics and values that should guide the exercise of power, so that the geopolitical landscape of the 21st century may be characterized by a truly just and harmonious world order*, adopted in Rome, October 11, 2019; and *Resolution on promoting a rules-based international order founded upon universal ethics and humanitarian values*, adopted in Yogyakarta (Indonesia), January 23, 2020, <https://baytarrahmah.org/key-texts/>.

97 Speaking about Indonesian Muslim leaders who founded the global Humanitarian Islam movement, Thomas Schirrmacher, WEA Associate Secretary General for Theological Concerns and Religious Freedom, commented, “Even though the WEA has a large dialogue program with top Muslim leaders worldwide, we especially seek a close cooperation with those Muslim leaders and theologians who join us in fighting for human rights and against racism, religious extremism outside Islam, and religious extremism inside Islam, and any way to subordinate the State under any religious group. We have studied in depth the reasons why Indonesia takes a different and positive road in its relation to religious minorities and are convinced that it would be helpful if Indonesia could present its experience to as many other states as possible.” Quoted in “Global Evangelical and Muslim Organizations Launch Major Joint Religious Freedom Project,” a press release issued by the World Evangelical Alliance, Gerakan Pemuda Ansor and Bayt ar-Rahmah on April 21-22, 2020, accessed May 11, 2020, https://baytarrahmah.org/2020_04_22_global-evangelical-and-muslim-organizations-launch-major-joint-religious-freedom-project/.

98 H.E. KH. Abdurrahman Wahid, “God Needs No Defense,” Foreword in *Silenced: How Apostasy and Blasphemy Codes are Choking Freedom Worldwide*, eds. Paul Marshall and Nina Shea (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. xviii.

99 The Indosphere, or the historically “Indianized” civilizational sphere, includes the eight nations covered in RFI SSE-AT’s regional landscape report and several countries not covered in the report, including Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Singapore.

100 The Positive Deviance Collaborative goes on to say, “The Positive Deviance approach is an asset-based, problem-solving, and community-driven approach that enables the community to discover these successful behaviors and strategies and develop a plan of action to promote their adoption by all concerned”; from the website of the Positive Deviance Collaborative: <https://positivedeviance.org>. The Fetzer Institute in Kalamazoo, Michigan has been an important supporter of the “positive deviance” approach.

101 A. Mustafa Bisri and C. Holland Taylor, “Indonesia’s ‘big idea’: Resolving the bitter global debate on Islam,” *Strategic Review: The Indonesian Journal of Leadership, Policy and World Affairs*, July-September 2012; available at https://www.libforall.org/lfa/media/2012/Strategic-Review_Indonesia-s_Big_Idea_Jul-Sep-12.pdf.

102 Cf. the 22nd Annual Templeton Lecture on Religion & World Affairs,

delivered by Dr. Christopher Seiple on October 30, 2018; available at <https://www.fpri.org/article/2018/11/the-call-of-covenantal-pluralism-defeating-religious-nationalism-with-faithful-patriotism/>.

103 The dramatic decline that Pakistan’s religious minorities—including its Christian community—have experienced in their security, freedom, and numbers since independence in 1947 has been powerfully documented and explained by RFI SSEA-AT senior fellow Farahnaz Ispahani in her monograph, *Purifying the Land of the Pure: A History of Pakistan’s Religious Minorities* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

104 This finding is relevant not only to Christian minorities living under threat, but also to Western governments and NGOs seeking to mitigate and prevent religious persecution and foster religious freedom around the world. In fact, *In Response to Persecution*, the report summarizing the findings of the Under Caesar’s Sword Project, specifically calls on governments and multilateral institutions to “[d]etermine if there are locally available social and ethical resources that can enhance local initiatives and also make international human rights norms more culturally relevant and thus effective—for instance, building bridges in Indonesia to the many Muslims who adhere to its tradition of plurality and multi-confessional citizenship” (“Recommendations for Action: External Governments and Multilateral Institutions,” in Daniel Philpott, *In Response to Persecution*, Under Caesar’s Sword Project, 2017, p. 51).

105 Robert W. Hefner, “Christians and Multireligious Citizenship in Muslim Indonesia,” in Daniel Philpott and Timothy Shah, eds., *Under Caesar’s Sword: How Christians Respond to Persecution* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 359.

106 Hefner, “Christians and Multireligious Citizenship,” p. 389.

107 Cf. Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid and C. Holland Taylor, “In Indonesia, Songs against Terrorism,” *Washington Post*, October 7, 2005.

108 For example, see Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid, ed., *Ilusi Negara Islam (The Illusion of an Islamic State)* Jakarta, Indonesia: LibForAll Foundation, Wahid Institute and Maarif Institute, 2009/2011) and Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staquf, et al, *Hasil-Hasil Musyawarah Nasional Alim Ulama Nahdlatul Ulama 2019 (Findings of the 2019 National Conference of Nahdlatul Ulama Religious Scholars)*, Jakarta: Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board, 2019.

109 Christopher Seiple, “Can the best of faith defeat the worst of religion?,” *World Economic Forum*, September 13, 2013. Available at <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2013/09/can-the-best-of-faith-defeat-the-worst-of-religion/>.

110 Actors not listed in any particular order.

111 The claim here is not that Indonesians in general or Indonesian Muslim leaders in particular learned Dutch and therefore did not speak English. Nor do we mean to suggest that no Indonesian Muslim leaders learned English. As Indonesia expert and RFI senior fellow Robert Hefner observes, fewer than 1% of Indonesians ever

learned to speak Dutch. The point is simply that unlike many British Commonwealth nations, including Muslim-majority countries such as Pakistan and Malaysia, Indonesia developed few English-speaking cultural and religious elites. Under Dutch colonial rule, English was neither the official language of state nor the widespread language of education and culture. Again, this is not to say the Dutch imposed the Dutch language; as Hefner observes, Dutch colonial rulers engaged the citizens of the East Indies using Malay. The bottom line remains, however, that far fewer Muslim leaders in Indonesia can communicate effectively in either written or spoken English than comparable Muslim leaders and elites in South Asia and to a lesser extent the Middle East.

112 Karen B. Brooks, "Indonesia's Election Exposes Growing Religious Divide," *Council on Foreign Relations*, May 22, 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/indonesias-election-exposes-growing-religious-divide>.

113 Pew Research Center, *A Closer Look at How Religious Restrictions Have Risen Around the World*, July 15, 2019, <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/07/15/a-closer-look-at-how-religious-restrictions-have-risen-around-the-world/>.

114 Pew Research Center, *A Closer Look at How Religious Restrictions Have Risen Around the World*, "Appendix C: Religious Restrictions Index Scores By Region," July 15, 2019, https://www.pewforum.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2019/07/4-PF_19.07.15_Restrictions2019appendixC.pdf.

115 Ibid.



Religious Freedom Institute

The Religious Freedom Institute is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to achieving broad acceptance of religious liberty as a fundamental human right, the cornerstone of a successful society, and a source of national and international security.



Templeton Religion Trust

Providing the funding that made this report possible, Templeton Religion Trust (TRT) is a global charitable trust chartered by Sir John Templeton in 1984 with headquarters in Nassau, The Bahamas, where Sir John lived until his death in 2008. TRT has been active since 2012, and supports projects and the dissemination of results from projects seeking to enrich the conversation about religion.



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316 Pennsylvania Ave. SE, Suite 501
Washington, DC 20003
Tel: 202-838-7734
rfi@religiousfreedominstitute.org
www.religiousfreedominstitute.org

